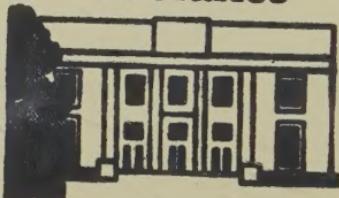


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WITHDRAWN

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

The Islamic
the world

EKMELEDDIN İHSANOĞLU

The Islamic World in the New Century

*The Organisation
of the Islamic Conference*



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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	xii
Introduction	1
1. Historical Background	13
<i>The Muslim Ummah: the worldwide community of faith</i>	13
<i>Early Islamic fora: the inter-war era</i>	15
The Cairo Congress	15
The Mecca Conference	16
Response from Ankara	17
The General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem	17
The European Muslim Congress	18
<i>Early Islamic fora: the post-war era</i>	18
<i>The first Islamic Summit, founding conference of the OIC</i>	22
2. The OIC from 1969–2004: Foundation and Consolidation	25
<i>The formative years</i>	26
The First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers	28
The Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers	28
The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers	28
The Second Islamic Summit	29
The Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers	31
The Third Islamic Summit	31
The Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers	33
<i>Membership development</i>	34
<i>Structural consolidation</i>	35
Standing Committees	38
Subsidiary Organs	39
– Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF)	39

CONTENTS

– Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC, changed to SESRIC)	40
– Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)	41
– International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA)	42
– Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT)	42
– Islamic University of Technology	42
– Islamic Universities of Niger and Uganda	43
– Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD)	43
– International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage (ICPICH)	43
– World Centre for Islamic Education	44
Specialised Institutions	44
– International Islamic News Agency (IINA)	45
– Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation (ISBO)	45
– Islamic Development Bank (IDB)	45
– Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO)	47
Affiliated Institutions	47
– Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI)	47
– Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF)	48
– Organisation of the Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA)	48
– Organisation of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC)	49
– Islamic Committee for the International Crescent (ICIC)	49
– The Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)	49
3. Reform History	51
<i>The Niamey Process</i>	52
<i>The Riyadh Resolution</i>	56
Strategy of Joint Islamic Action	56
Structural Reforms	56
Coordinating Organs	58
<i>The Eminent Persons Group</i>	58
<i>The Intergovernmental Group of Experts</i>	62

CONTENTS

<i>The Accenture attempt</i>	63
<i>Was the OIC immune to reform?</i>	65
4. Reform and Renewal, and Review of the Charter	67
<i>A new, democratically elected OIC leadership</i>	69
<i>Reform of the General Secretariat</i>	70
<i>OIC Commission of Eminent Persons (CEP)</i>	71
<i>Top-level calls for reform</i>	73
<i>Mecca meeting of intellectuals and scholars</i>	74
– The Political and Media Panel's Recommendations	75
– Economy, Science and Technology Panel's Recommendations	75
– Islamic Thought, Culture and Education Panel's Recommendations	76
<i>Preparation of the Ten-Year Programme of Action</i>	77
<i>Extraordinary Mecca Summit</i>	79
<i>Reform in effect</i>	80
Review of the Charter	81
– Preparation of the Drafts for Consideration by the Advisory Panel	82
– A Committee of Eminent Jurists reviews the Charter	85
Restructuring of the OIC and its Institutions	88
– Birth of a New Organ: Executive Committee of the OIC Troikas	88
Reform of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy	91
Restructuring and Reviving the Role of the International Islamic News Agency	94
– A New Concept for the IINA	94
5. The OIC's Role in Promotion of Peace and Resolution of Conflicts	97
<i>Expanded strategies</i>	99
<i>OIC action with regard to some political causes of the Muslim World</i>	101
Palestine	101
Afghanistan	113
Bosnia	116
Jammu and Kashmir	119
Iraq	121
Somalia	124

CONTENTS

6. Problems of Muslim Communities and Minorities in the World	127
<i>Guidelines for action</i>	127
<i>Some major problem cases</i>	130
The Muslim Community in Bulgaria	130
The Muslims in the Southern Philippines	133
The European Muslim Minority in Western Thrace, Greece	136
The Muslim Minority in Myanmar	138
The Muslims in Southern Thailand	139
Muslim Communities in the People's Republic of China	142
7. Islamophobia: A Threat to Global Peace	143
<i>Perceptions of Islamophobia</i>	144
<i>Background and prospects of historical reconciliation</i>	145
<i>Major Islamophobic incidents and OIC endeavours</i>	149
The Danish Cartoons Crisis: Chronology	149
Conclusion Regarding the 'Cartoon Crisis'	160
The Dutch Film <i>Fitna</i> and Reprints of the Cartoons	161
The OIC approach	163
8. Building Institutional Capacity for Progress and Development in the Era of Globalisation	173
<i>Building social solidarity to manage post-disaster humanitarian relief</i>	175
<i>Good governance and promoting human rights</i>	181
Moving Towards Good Governance	181
Adoption of the Amended Charter and Provisions on Human Rights	185
– Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights	186
– Protecting the Rights of Women	186
<i>Reinvigorating science, technology and innovation in the Muslim world</i>	188
OIC University Ranking	191
Early Harvest and Mega Projects	192
Atlas of Islamic-World Innovation	192
9. Economic and Commercial Cooperation	197
<i>Multilateral agreements and statutes</i>	198

CONTENTS

<i>The 1981 Plan of Action and the Creation of COMCEC</i>	199
<i>The Ten-Year Programme of Action</i>	202
<i>Trade preferential system and efforts to promote intra-OIC trade</i>	203
<i>Poverty alleviation and the Islamic solidarity fund for development</i>	209
<i>The cotton programme</i>	211
<i>A major joint-venture project: Dakar-Port Sudan rail link</i>	214
<i>Cooperation in tourism development</i>	216
Annex: Statistical indicators of the OIC Member Countries	219
Epilogue	229
Notes	235
Appendices	243
1. <i>The OIC's Secretaries General since its inception</i>	245
2. <i>Inaugural Statement of Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (Jeddah, 28 December 2004)</i>	246
3. <i>Ten-Year Programme of Action to Meet the Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah in the 21st Century</i>	256
4. <i>Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference</i>	270
5. <i>Mecca Declaration on the Iraqi Situation (20 October 2006)</i>	287
6. <i>Selected speeches of the Secretary General</i>	291
7. <i>Open letter addressed by the Secretary General to President Obama published in New York Times and International Herald Tribune (20 January 2009)</i>	318
8. <i>Agenda of the Eleventh Islamic Summit (Dakar, 13–14 March 2008)</i>	322
9. <i>Agenda of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (Damascus, 23–25 May 2009)</i>	323
Photographs	327

PREFACE

Now forty years old, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference is an intergovernmental organisation belonging to what is known as the Muslim world. In terms of membership, it is the second largest institution of its kind after the United Nations. In 2005, I had the privilege of becoming its ninth Secretary General and its first democratically elected head.

I took the office at a time when the Organisation was at a juncture calling for reform. In the preceding decades, the OIC had managed to keep its identity based on an expression of noble intent amidst the tumultuous developments in the international system. Its Member States maintained their support for the OIC hoping that it would effect collective change. With varying hopes and expectations, OIC activities brought mixed results.

The OIC rests on the energy and effort of a number of states, individuals and processes that are all keen to unlock the potentials of the Muslim world. By 2005 there was a renewed determination emanating from Member States to reinvigorate the OIC and reframe it to be fit for purpose.

This book outlines the OIC's subsequent reform process from an insider's perspective. Given the trials and tribulations that the Muslim world has endured, it is a necessary institutional account of how, despite some widely held views to the contrary, governments have sought to collectively energise the Muslim world through the OIC so that it could achieve more positive and enduring results towards development, welfare and human progress. Activities undertaken on this score and the action I have been leading as its Secretary General are recounted here up to roughly the middle of 2009. The OIC has a long way to go, but it is already beginning to yield results and is making a mark on the world stage.

PREFACE

I would like to express my appreciation to the institutions and individuals who made invaluable contributions to this book in various ways, in particular, colleagues at the OIC General Secretariat: Saadeddin Taib, Syed Hassan Raza, Shaher Awawdeh, Ufuk Gökçen, H. Oker Gürler, H. Basri Arslan; Zeynep Durukal (IRCICA); and Savaş Alpay (SESRIC).

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Muslim world’ refers to the worldwide community that adheres to or has been touched by the faith and history of Islam. Spread over four continents, the population of the Muslim world covers almost one-fifth of humanity. Islam has affected every aspect of the political, cultural and spiritual directions of the Muslim world; it has done so through diverse experiences which created the rich mosaic that forms it.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is an expression of a shared will for solidarity and cooperation that draws its binding force from these experiences. Established in 1969 by a decision of twenty-five countries, today it has fifty-seven members. These are mostly Muslim-majority countries. The OIC serves both as a forum for discussing matters of common interest and as a platform for assuming and coordinating individual and collective roles and positions in international affairs. It also creates frameworks for action aimed at furthering the Member States’ interests and realising their objectives and aspirations. After four decades of existence, the OIC now constitutes an arena where a significant part of its Member States’ external relations is streamlined.

In 1969, the OIC was born into a world that was very different from today. Throughout its history, its course of evolution has been closely linked to developments in world politics and economy. A study of the development of the OIC therefore reaches beyond the scope of most institutional histories and reflects characteristics worthy of interest in the global context.

In this book the history of the OIC is told from an insider’s standpoint. The reader will find a particular focus on the main stages of its recent development, revealing the factors that led to the 2005–08 reform and restructuring process, which is one of the most important parts of this history and therefore the primary theme of this book.

INTRODUCTION

Every institutional entity is rooted in a combination of ideas and realities. At the birth of the OIC, ‘Islamic solidarity’ was one of the key motivations. Over the years, the OIC has functioned as a common forum for its members, and as such it is shaped in a different mould from organisations like the European Union. It has brought together a large number of countries with varying demographic, geographical and economic features, as well as diverse state systems and social structures. With time, the initiative evolved into a fully-fledged intergovernmental organisation.

The OIC’s development has been influenced by major transformations in world politics as well as significant changes and challenges that have faced the Muslim world since the Organisation’s inception, and it has responded accordingly. A large number of the present OIC countries gained independence after the Second World War, and went through tumultuous transitions in order to consolidate their states and join the community of nations. In many cases, periods of uncertainty and turmoil such as military coups, one-party regimes, autocratic rule based on the cult of leadership, and experiments with transient ideologies have delayed rather than accelerated national development. It is also noteworthy that even though the historical experiences of Muslim peoples were different from each other, a glimpse at the administrative systems of the states they founded reveals that religion—Islam—has constantly maintained its importance and sensitivity in both internal and external politics.

Today, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, a consensus is far from being reached and controversy still persists over the position and weight of religion as a frame of reference in the internal and external affairs of Muslim countries. The place and effect of Islam in Muslim societies, and the way the faith is reflected in their relations with the wider international community, depend upon where and how each country draws the line between religion and politics. Muslims are not alone in debating this point, particularly as the role of faith in contemporary society becomes one of the pressing issues of our time. However, it is worth nothing that Islam, as a religion, has a different place in the workings of society compared to other religions.

Islam occupied a distinct place in the ‘polity’ from its advent until the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, and a failure to understand and acknowledge this has often resulted in misleading interpretations and theories about Muslim society. Such analyses lack crucial insight of the

INTRODUCTION

realities of the Muslim world and lead to a superficial understanding of Islam, disregarding its real cultural and religious aspects. The danger is that these analyses have influenced politicians and intellectuals both outside and inside Muslim countries.

Muslim countries have experienced a diverse scale of politics, and the ideological landscape reflects that experience. At one end of the spectrum, some Islamist regimes have embraced the strictest possible interpretations and practices of Islam. At the other end, secularist regimes have denied Islam any role in governance. A third, middle path has been adopted by other Muslim countries with variations; among them are countries whose constitution contains a clause declaring Islam as a major source of legislation. In all these three groups, many countries' constitutions adopt the principle of '*patria*', or belonging to the same homeland, as the umbrella that covers all citizens without distinction as to race or religion. In opposition to all these trends there are radical political movements which use Islam to justify their repugnant and illegitimate practices. One of the main accusations labelled against Islam on the international scene is based on the unjustified and unfounded linking of the practices of these illegal radical political movements with Islam.

One of the main factors contributing to this situation was the ideological vacuum left by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The failure of communism and its ideological states caused a sense of aimlessness among dynamic segments of the population in developing countries, especially among their larger, low-income groups. These groups began to demand changes to rectify the failures they saw in their own countries' internal and external policies. As a result, violent and militant politicised 'movements' began to appeal to larger masses under the guise of Islam and won growing popularity as they offered solutions to the acute problems of daily life and also salvation in the Hereafter. Injustice and aggression directed against Muslim nations and communities during the same period reinforced this process. World events like the persistent plight of the Palestinian people who are subjected to inhumane treatment, and the harsh military interventions conducted against Muslim communities of the Balkans and the Caucasus in the 1990s—particularly the human tragedies that struck Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo after dissolution of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Federation of Yugoslavia—have all created righteous indignation in the Muslim world. Extremist groups have fed off

INTRODUCTION

these attacks to give succour to the toxic hypothesis of the ‘clash of civilisations’, inflaming anger and resentment that it is the Muslim world which is bearing the brunt of this clash.

The history of relations between the Muslim and the Western worlds is a story that is broad, complicated and intricate, and consists of a controversial set of relationships. Even the framing of the discussion between ‘Islam’ and ‘The West’ is fraught with difficulties because the relationship has always been fluid, dynamic and creative. This is not to deny that deep-rooted historical prejudices and perceptions exist on both sides. Furthermore, in recent years, the attacks that have been directed at Islam as a religion, and which increasingly place the Prophet Muhammad at the centre of this vile campaign, have caused strong reactions among vulnerable population groups in the Muslim world. Such actions exacerbate mistrust among Muslim communities, and if Western governments fail to take preventive measures against these unjustified attacks—which tragically translate into violence and the desecration of Muslims tombs in Europe—not only will the Muslim world be unable to eliminate radicalism, but new forms of that phenomenon may emerge.

Another negative factor was the apportioning of blame for the tragedy of the 11 September attacks in 2001. This created an unfounded, superficial and far-reaching lack of confidence between the Western and the Muslim worlds. Many are incensed at the way some Western circles attribute the attacks to the Muslim world and its value systems, instead of placing the blame on the shoulders of a handful of evil-minded terrorists. A question awaiting an answer is, how does the Western world accept, without scrutiny, the claims of such violent groups that they act on behalf of Islam, given that there is no Islamic reference whatsoever to justify such a claim? The OIC, together with governmental and religious institutions in the Muslim world, have condemned these heinous acts and stated clearly that they can never be associated with Islam. Thus, accepting the culprits’ pretensions would serve no purpose but to encourage them.

Mutual understanding and agreement are conditional on being freed from these prejudices and from what many in the Muslim world see as condescending attitudes based on long-standing mistrust and short-term economic interests. Instead, what is required is the adoption of policies governed by mutual respect and fair practice.

That is not to say that the Muslim world lacks any responsibility in this pursuit. The socio-economic development of the Muslim world,

INTRODUCTION

which will determine its future, will no doubt bring modernisation and, together with it, moderation. The establishment of an equilibrium, whereby Islam is properly positioned in social life and its relation with politics is based on mutual non-interference, will contribute positively to peace and order in the Muslim world and beyond.

The principal mission that the Organisation of the Islamic Conference assumes today is to achieve modernisation and moderation in the Muslim world. These two animating principles, together with a number of related measures, shape the guiding concept and vision of the Ten-Year Programme of Action adopted by the OIC's Extraordinary Summit in Mecca in 2005. Since my taking office in the same year, this Programme has framed our efforts to reorganise the OIC's activities, which we are implementing under the motto of 'Solidarity in Action'. Within this framework issues such as socio-economic development, eradication of disease, and the advancement of science and technology are given priority. Another objective of this Programme is to lay new foundations of mutual respect and understanding for relations between the Muslim world and the Western world. This book aims to address these crucial issues.

The tumultuous political and ideological changes that set the scene for the OIC's evolution over the decades have been accompanied by another major trend witnessed in the twentieth century: the development efforts of the relatively new states. In a wider context, this was part of the 'bargain' between the 'North' and the 'South'. The Muslim countries were all part of the South and what became known as the developing world, and most still are. They strove for equal opportunities with the North in world business and struggled to achieve economic growth and industrialisation. In this effort they increasingly sought ways to cooperate amongst themselves, in order to increase mutual trade and investment and to solve common problems through bilateral or multilateral arrangements. Ideas and actions were deployed by the developing countries around the theme of 'economic cooperation for development'. More recently the expansion of the global economy from the 1990s, involving the entry of very many more people into the world's markets and trade, has had and continues to have tangible effects on Muslim countries. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether those gains will be lost in the current world economic crisis; if the adverse effects are disproportionate in their impact on already fragile economies, the results can be injurious for the latter.

INTRODUCTION

These trends have engendered a strong awareness amongst Muslim countries in the twenty-first century of their populations' greater needs and expectations for economic growth and prosperity. This requires the removal of obstacles in the way of social mobility and advancement, the achievement of sustainable development, and the democratisation of political systems. The founding goals now have found new formulations in the terms and context of the twenty-first century.

Where does the OIC stand in the future vision of Muslim nations? In the eyes of many, the OIC is a symbol of unity and a framework representing the centuries-old concept of the *Ummah*, the worldwide community of Muslims forged through bonds of faith. Although this outlook is manifested differently throughout the Muslim world, a common spirit stemming from a long shared history and traditions deeply rooted in the common faith supports this understanding. People's expectations of the OIC generally rise to a peak during periods when their own countries or Muslims in general face problems.

Naturally, the expectations of the Member States of the OIC differ from one country to another, and are shaped primarily by two considerations amongst a wider landscape of complex determinants. This wider context includes the motives that led to the establishment of the OIC, which will be detailed in the early chapters of this book; it also includes the obligation to meet people's needs and aspirations, as already mentioned.

The first consideration is that the OIC creates the possibility of obtaining political support and cooperation from the Muslim world on the basis of Islamic solidarity. This is especially the case in situations where eliciting support and cooperation can be challenging within the framework of other intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations, owing to the delicate international political power balances in which the UN operates. Examples throughout this book will show that this demand for political support has been met very successfully in some cases, while in others it has remained as an expression of 'moral support'. In both cases the governments of Member States would present the successes obtained in the OIC to their populations as important achievements.

The second consideration is economic. The majority of the OIC countries are non-industrialised countries and twenty-two of them are among the world's least developed nations. Their governments have invested hopes in the economic programmes of the OIC and its affiliated institutions, particularly the Islamic Development Bank.

INTRODUCTION

For many, the greatest expectation placed in the OIC is that it will act as a forum to address common concerns as well as a platform for action. As will be outlined in the coming chapters, the OIC's agenda expanded from the earliest years onwards and increasingly reinforced the concept of all-encompassing cooperation. By the end of the first decade of activities this understanding came to be expressed by the term 'Joint Islamic Action'. Though decisions are generally taken by consensus and shaped by positions adopted by politically and economically influential Member States, it is worth noting here that, also by consensus, the OIC has been able to develop effective policies on some issues to which public opinion in Muslim countries is most sensitive, and that these decisions have influenced national policies.

On the whole, the history of the OIC is one of evolution, facing times of hardship and success, of slow-down and acceleration. At all times, the Organisation's role as an intergovernmental forum has been constant. Each of the annual and extraordinary ministerial meetings and triennial and extraordinary Summits has been an occasion for the Member States to reaffirm solidarity among them and renew their commitment to the OIC's objectives.

At the same time, international trends have been influential in the development of joint Islamic action within the OIC framework. As has been described earlier, one of the factors that helped to expand the OIC's scope of action in the 1970s, soon after its establishment, was the increasing trend towards cooperation among developing countries. The transformations in world politics since then, which have been reflected in the changes and challenges faced by the Muslim world, have underlined the ongoing need for international cooperation.

Over the years, the OIC has progressed with a forward looking and ever-expanding agenda. It has implemented cooperation schemes among its Member States, mostly in economic fields, and has continued to serve as a periodical forum where the Member States have raised problems of common concern. In addition it has issued statements and resolutions on matters within and beyond the geographical realm of the Member States.

Each forum in its own right had immense value, being futuristic and looking to set the agenda. The greatest challenge for the OIC was to harness the momentum and dynamism arising from one Summit meeting to carry the Organisation to the next. The interim period was generally characterised by a loss of interest and enthusiasm, and

INTRODUCTION

subsequent meetings sometimes became a routine, reiterating earlier resolutions. The Organisation was moving on with its acquired momentum, lacking dynamism and novelty.

Attempts to reinvigorate the Organisation's functioning and to dispel institutional malaise began as early as 1982, with the first phase concluding in 1989. One of its concerns was to coordinate and prevent duplication in the activities of its growing number of agencies. Another, broader process started five years later, in 1994, aiming to revise the Organisation's activities and propose significant reforms: a series of expert committee meetings were held and a number of reports were issued. However, it was in 2005 that a reform process was effectively launched, based on the blueprint of the first democratically elected Secretary General. This process, which is still ongoing, began with the amendment of the Charter of the OIC in the light of present-day requirements. This process of reform will be studied in this book in greater detail.

This same year saw another milestone in the OIC's history. It was the first time that the OIC addressed a fundamental question, one that would be a turning point in the Organisation's existence. Under the reform agenda that I was driving, this simple but essential question was formulated openly and had a considerable impact on the reform process: is there a need for the OIC? The question was raised at the OIC Intellectual Forum, a brainstorming meeting of nearly a hundred scholars and intellectuals held in September that year, in preparation for the Third Extraordinary Summit meeting to take place in December 2005. It was recalled that the countries in the three main groups of the fifty-seven OIC Member States—the African, Arab and Asian groups—are also members of various regional groupings, sometimes joining non-OIC countries in organisations such as the African Union, ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The OIC countries are at the same time also members of the United Nations Organisation. So, do these fifty-seven countries need the OIC besides the UN and their regional organisations? The outcome was a unanimous and strongly affirmative answer: 'Yes, there is a need for the OIC.'

Then, the challenge was to meet this need and to realise it.

This affirmation underpinned a renewed resolve to equip the Organisation to meet the fast-changing realities taking place around it. The OIC has accelerated its momentum by redefining and restating its

INTRODUCTION

objectives in view of the realities of the twenty-first century, and igniting a process of modernisation and improvement of its operations to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency. It now plays a leading role in mobilising the potential of its Member States towards cooperation for development.

The Organisation is increasingly assuming its position on the world stage as the voice of the Muslim world; as a result, other countries, including those among the G-8, are approaching the OIC to acquire observer status or to establish special relations with it.

The strengthening of this new reality of the OIC is a prime objective at this present time. Efforts will be made in this direction at two main levels and will correspond to the Muslim world's goals and vision as expressed in the OIC Charter. The first level concerns the OIC as the expression of a historical and sociological reality—that is, as the representative of the Muslim *Ummah*. The second concerns the OIC as a forum and an agent for South-South cooperation. With fifty-seven Member States it is of a manageable size for economic cooperation schemes and at the same time large enough to offer diversities and complementarities.

The progress achieved in the current reform process provides much evidence to suggest that the OIC is capable of making breakthroughs in meeting the challenges mentioned. The reform scheme, coupled with the adoption of a new Charter by all the Member States, has placed the OIC at the threshold of a new phase. This will involve the implementation of the Charter's articles on the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms; good governance; the rule of law; and democracy and accountability in the Member States.

There is no doubt that the future of the Muslim world depends to a large extent on the articulation and development of the principles of good governance, together with the establishment of a tradition of pluralistic democratic practices. To be sure, this is no easy undertaking. It entails unflinching perseverance as it is likely to span more than a generation.

In their recent history, many Muslim countries have not at all experienced democracy in the modern sense of the word. Similarly, those Muslim countries that have lived through some form of democratic governance have suffered setbacks and confronted crises that have simply cut short the democratic experience.

Yet Islamic heritage and history are full of memorable instances of good governance and the immutable principles that uphold it. We

INTRODUCTION

heartily believe that there is no fundamental dissonance between the application of pluralistic democracy and the foundations of good governance in Islam.

Looking back to the middle of the last century of the Ottoman Caliphate, we see clearly that it embraced a modern constitution and founded a parliament along with other institutions that are the hallmarks of a modern state. During that period, prominent Muslim scholars and leaders saw no conflict or disparity between these modern institutions, on the one hand, and the traditions of Islam and its fundamental principles of governance on the other. Better still, a significant number of those scholars and eminent Muslim figures actually contributed to, and participated in, the building of the foundations of modern institutions.

Considering that the road to democracy was never paved with roses in those countries with long-standing traditions of democratic governance, we admit that democratisation as stated above cannot be achieved without establishing two critical principles. The first principle is good governance and transparency at the level of public affairs management and the implementation of accountability. The second is the need to allow political freedoms to be ingrained in the well-established rules of human rights.

Without these two vital principles, the sole outlet for the politically active in Muslim societies will be to seek to achieve their ambitions by falling back into the religious sphere. This scenario, if it unfolds, will eventually complicate matters and make them worse than they are today.

In order for Muslim societies to move resolutely down the path of progress, they need to define the relationship between the religious and the political without letting one intrude into the other. The relationship should be based on mutual respect, allowing and accepting pluralism, and also allowing change and transition in political power through democratic means. Muslim societies ought to lift the control exercised by the religious over the political and vice versa. They need to clearly determine the demarcation line between the two.

The OIC's Ten-Year Programme of Action and its new Charter constitute holistic constitutional grounds for such an approach. They offer a clear road map that charts the way out of the tribulations that have plagued the Muslim world throughout much of the twentieth century.

INTRODUCTION

With its vision reformulated, its potential reinvigorated during the process of reform, and guided by the Programme of Action and the new Charter, the OIC has laid strong foundations for assuming a central role in meeting the existing and future challenges of the twenty-first century. It stands as a leading global body to contribute to solidarity, development and prosperity in the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Muslim Ummah: the worldwide community of faith

The concept of the Muslim *Ummah* as a community that shares a destiny and a commitment to common values is as old as Islam itself. Likewise, the feeling of belonging to the *Ummah* in this sense has enjoyed a central position in Islamic thought throughout history. It was this feeling that contributed to keeping Muslim peoples, by and large, together under the banner of Islamic Caliphates for thirteen centuries. The last Caliphate, the Ottoman State, governed wide parts of the contemporary Muslim world and lived for four centuries until its abolition in 1924. Although the Ottoman Caliphate was by no means the only Muslim power at the time, and existed during a period of a preponderant colonialism and an ever factious Muslim world, the institution of the Ottoman Caliphate embodied an important centre of gravity for Muslims, a symbol of unity and a mantle of leadership.

Understandings of Islamic solidarity and unity are enshrined in the Holy Quran and the *Hadith*, the traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. In practice, these ideas have manifested themselves in diverse ways and at different times. The establishment and subsequent development of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference can be considered as representing the concrete manifestations of the concept of ‘Islamic solidarity’ in the contemporary world. The OIC emerged in response to the socio-political circumstances of recent history and has evolved in a continuum. It cemented a desire, expressed since long

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

before, to demonstrate Islamic solidarity or unity in the framework of a corporate international forum.

Before the OIC came into being, Muslim world leaders had made several calls and taken several initiatives to convene Islamic fora in pursuit of common objectives. At an early stage, the abolition in 1924 of the Caliphate, an institution under which many Muslims had lived for centuries, unleashed several soul-searching attempts to find alternatives. It was the first time that Muslims throughout their history experienced such a dissolution, which naturally had varied consequences for Muslim communities. Confronted with the demise of this once enduring model of Islamic unity, various Muslim leaders and activists pursued several campaigns to re-institute the concept of solidarity in the Muslim world.

The first attempt was to restore the abolished Caliphate, and it came from the deposed Ottoman Caliph himself. A few days after the abolition of the Caliphate and his being sent to exile, Abdulmejid II held a press conference in Switzerland in which he stressed his rejection of the abolition, considering the abolition decree of the Turkish Parliament void. He also called upon the leaders and representatives of Muslim communities to cooperate in planning an international conference to discuss the grave state of affairs resulting from the abolition.¹ The proposal for such a conference subsequently became a model for the approach by several reformers and Muslim leaders keen on restoring the Caliphate.

From the mid-1920s this became a political trend, with the revival of the Islamic Caliphate not simply seen through Ottoman eyes but viewed through a reconstituted concept of 'Islamic solidarity'. Islamic solidarity was viewed not only as a workable way to restore the Caliphate, but also as the most appropriate response to the political challenges facing the *Ummah* as a result of colonialism and fragmentation. It became a prevalent theme in the thinking of a number of community, religious and political leaders in the Muslim world.

While some of these attempts were initiated by scholars, religious and community leaders, political leaders of Muslim countries proposed and initiated various forms of solidarity and cooperation to bring Muslim countries together on official platforms. While the demise of the Caliphate was generally accepted, the need for Muslim countries to come together in a common cause became apparent.

Reflecting the dynamic changes in the international system at the time, the establishment of the League of Nations at the end of the First

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

World War had shown that a permanent multinational organisation with a charter, a secretariat and regulations was feasible. This development gave fresh hopes to Muslim countries, and developing countries generally, for the establishment of common platforms.

That trend was revived after the Second World War, from 1950 onwards, after many Muslim countries gained independence. Attempts to achieve the goal of Islamic solidarity found expression in conventions held in different parts of the world with the aim of coordinating efforts and articulating collective positions on challenges and common problems.

What follows is an account of the most prominent conventions that were held from the 1920s onwards, corresponding to the inter-war era, and from the 1950s, corresponding to the post-war era. A review of these fora demonstrates how the precedent and rationale for the Organisation of Islamic Conference developed until it came to fruition in 1969.

Early Islamic fora: the inter-war era

The Cairo Congress

The abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 inspired a number of prominent *ulama*, or scholars, of Al-Azhar—the most respected seat of Islamic learning—to call for a congress to discuss the matter. A proclamation was thus issued announcing the intention to convene a Muslim congress to which representatives from all Muslim communities would be invited. The call enjoyed special support from King Fuad I of Egypt. The Rector of Al-Azhar also formed several outreach committees to garner support from local communities in Egypt. A permanent secretariat was appointed for the congress, which was held in May 1926 with the participation of delegates from India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaya, Morocco, Poland, South Africa, Yemen and Egypt itself. Although the congress did not achieve a significant outcome in terms of restoring the Caliphate, it highlighted the necessity of Islamic solidarity and appealed to all Muslims not to neglect the question of the Caliphate, and to work for its restoration. Several ideas on the best ways to restore the Caliphate were circulated and discussed by the congress. For example, the idea of electing a Caliph was proposed by Shaykh Muhammad Zawahiri, an Islamic judicial expert and later rector of

Al-Azhar, who argued that 'a candidate elected by a subsequent congress, if that congress were more representative, would meet the requirements of the *sharia* by virtue of his election by a consensus of Muslims.'²

The ideas raised by the Cairo Conference on finding alternatives to the abolished Caliphate were very inspiring for several reformers and scholars. Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri, for example, then an Egyptian postgraduate student, found in the Cairo Caliphate Conference a sound base for his respected scholarly work *Le Califat*.³ This was originally his doctorate thesis in which he envisioned the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate as a modern form of governance. He argued that as long as it was difficult to establish the 'regular caliphate' the more appropriate alternative would be to establish the 'irregular caliphate'; this would mean the caliph being elected by the representatives of the Muslim peoples instead of inheriting the title by virtue of belonging to a certain dynasty. According to this model, two distinct branches (religious and political) of government would be created and presided over by an elected president or caliph. One of the branches would be an organisation of Islamic religious affairs, whose structure would include a Supreme Council and a General Assembly with full representation of the Muslim peoples; the Supreme Council would deal with matters of Islamic worship, pilgrimage, education, finance and foreign relations. As for the political branch, it would function as the League of Eastern Nations. The aim of this organisation would be similar to that of most governmental organisations, and it would work to achieve internal stability and external security for its members as well as striving for international peace and cooperation. The establishment of the second branch, according to al-Sanhuri, would be contingent on an intellectual and cultural renaissance in all fields of knowledge. Once this political branch was fully established, the president of the organisation of Islamic religious affairs would assume the leadership of both branches, thus presiding over a modern form of governance.

The Mecca Conference

On the invitation of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, another Islamic gathering was held in Mecca in June 1926. The conference was attended by dozens of delegates from various parts of the Muslim world—from

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Malaya, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, the Soviet Union and Yemen, among others. This was a high profile gathering that included diplomats and senior religious leaders such as Shaykh Muhammad Zawahiri, who headed the Egyptian delegation.⁴ Amongst other subjects, the conference decided to institutionalise itself by forming a permanent organisation named the Congress of the Islamic World, to meet annually in Mecca. It also provided for the establishment of a standing committee. The congress continued to meet under various names, and its most prominent meeting took place in 1931.

Response from Ankara

A year after the Cairo and Mecca congresses and the publication of Sanhuri's book, Mustafa Kemal, founder of the Republic of Turkey, who had abolished the Caliphate, responded positively to the proposals seeking to fill the vacuum caused by its abolition. In a wide-ranging, six-day speech defending his political career, Mustafa Kemal proposed in October 1927 that when Muslim communities living in Europe, Asia and Africa gained their independence in the future, their representatives could come together to form a congress and constitute a council with the purpose of acting together. He further suggested that the 'pan-Islamist federal government' that would thus be established could be named the Caliphate, and the person to be elected as the chairman of the joint council could be given the title of Caliph.⁵ However, Mustafa Kemal indicated in his speech that it would be neither rational nor logical to entrust addressing and managing the problems of the entire Muslim world to one state or one person.⁶

The General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem

In July 1931, the Grand Mufti of Palestine and President of the Supreme Muslim Council of Palestine, Al-Haj Amin Al-Husseini, called for convening a Muslim congress in Jerusalem to deliberate upon the state of affairs of Muslims and identify measures to defend the interests of the *Ummah*. The crisis in Palestine was the gloomy context in which the congress agenda was shaped and proceedings took place. The congress aimed in particular at discussing the means for facing challenges posed by the Jewish immigration to Palestine and the projected establishment

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

of a Jewish state in Palestine. It also intended to discuss ways for preserving the Muslim Holy Places in Palestine and a concrete project for establishing a Muslim university in Jerusalem. Attended by delegates representing different Muslim countries and communities, the congress subsequently resolved to establish a Muslim university in Jerusalem and to convene a Muslim World Congress every two years. Institutional regulations of the congress were drawn. Elections to the leadership of the congress were held and the Grand Mufti was elected as its first president. Vice presidents from India and Egypt were also elected, and Jerusalem was chosen as the seat of the congress.

The European Muslim Congress

During this period, the contribution of Muslims residing in Europe was also important in raising awareness and gathering momentum for the cause of Islamic solidarity. Muhammad Salim, an Egyptian journalist then residing in Paris, and a former delegate to the Jerusalem congress, exerted strenuous efforts to convene a similar gathering for Muslims in Europe. With special support from Shakib Arslan, a Lebanese then resident in Geneva, Muhammad Salim spent two years preparing for a European Muslim Congress which was held in Geneva in September 1935. The Congress "represented a first attempt to gather [Muslim] activists from throughout the continent under one roof".⁷ In addition to Muslim activists of Europe, the Geneva Congress was attended by delegates from the Soviet Union, Palestine, and North Africa.⁸ The objectives of the congress as declared by its organisers were "to establish a social, economic and religious bond between the Muslims living in the West and the Muslim World".⁹ However, the Congress never met again and did not produce concrete results.

Although the aforementioned conventions were not able to achieve concrete goals, they were serious attempts at Islamic cooperation and solidarity. Moreover, they created public awareness on major campaigns of the Muslim world, including the Palestinian cause, and at the same time on the feasibility of Islamic solidarity.

Early Islamic fora: the post-war era

As the end of colonialism in the 1950s opened the way to a dramatic re-ordering of the geopolitical world map, it also provided the neces-

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

sary impetus to revive efforts to organise collective platforms of Muslim countries. Decolonisation took place against the tense backdrop of the Cold War and the ensuing bipolar rivalry in the international system. The desire for newly independent Muslim countries to come together took place in this context. Soon after the Second World War, the Muslim world witnessed a number of initiatives to establish inter-governmental cooperation on Islamic affairs.

Researchers commenting on the origins of the OIC have pointed to a complex set of circumstances encouraging Muslim countries to band together during this period. Saad Khan identifies a number of factors.¹⁰ The first was the desire of newly independent countries to demonstrate their sovereignty by seeking co-operation with other states, particularly in the Muslim world. While the focus during independence wars in the Muslim world was on liberation and emancipation from colonial powers, the newly independent countries wanted to enter into their own international arrangements as masters of their own affairs. Secondly, national leaders who had led their countries to independence tended to express their nationalism in terms of Third World cooperation and Islamic solidarity. Thirdly, economic reasons motivated Muslim leaders in favour of Islamic solidarity. During the colonial era, economies of most Muslim states were dependent on and integrated with economies of their respective colonial powers. This economic dependency continued even after independence. It was realised then that economic independence is crucial for political independence; this could be realised by fostering economic and technical cooperation with the South in general and the Muslim world in particular. The fourth factor was the creation of Israel and the subsequent plight of the Palestinians, in addition to the various wars of aggression that Israel launched against different regional states. This unleashed feelings of anger that found expression in calls for Islamic solidarity to face the threats posed by Israel.

In the midst of such conditions after the Second World War, momentous attempts were made by numerous Muslim leaders to establish an Islamic body capable of realising the aspiration that existed in the *Ummah* for cooperation and solidarity. The most notable attempts came from the Pakistani, Saudi and Malayan capitals. These initiatives were separate but they were also complementary and shared similar objectives. The lessons learned from each experience fed into the subsequent decision to form the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Following the establishment of the Dominion of Pakistan in 1947, an international Muslim conference was held at its then capital, Kara-

chi, in February 1949. Inaugurated by the country's first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, this colloquium revived the idea and institutionalised the Muslim World Congress, known as the Motamar al-Alam al-Islami in Arabic, a forum whose aims were first declared at the 1926 Mecca Conference. Institutional aspects of the Motamar were finalised by the next conference, held in Karachi in February 1951, which also decided to base its headquarters in the Pakistani capital.¹¹ The country's premier had called for the creation of an Islamic bloc responsible for fostering cooperation amongst Muslims in all cultural, economic and political fields. His call was echoed by a Pakistani minister who addressed the meeting and called for 'all Muslim countries [to become] part of an integrated whole capable of rendering service to each other in time of need'.¹² Its constitution was adopted later, at the fifth congress held in Baghdad, in 1962. After this establishment phase, the Motamar held sessions at different cities in the Muslim world over the ensuing years.

Concurrently, in 1954, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan also started talks on the establishment of a General Islamic Conference. A decision was taken to that effect in 1955 by King Saud of Saudi Arabia, Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Ghulam Muhammad of Pakistan.¹³ The Charter of this new institution, which was formally ratified in March 1956, focused on educational and cultural activities in addition to political goals. It also established a permanent secretariat in Cairo. Anwar Sadat was appointed as the Secretary General of the new body. The experience of the conference was short-lived.¹⁴ Pakistan later withdrew from the conference in 1957, and divergences between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in 1958 paralysed it. The conference was dissolved and Egypt turned the initiative into a local institution, renaming it the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

Another important endeavour came almost a decade later from Malaysia when the then Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra El-Haj, who later became the first OIC Secretary General, also expressed the desire to host a Muslim conference. In 1968, he sent an envoy to a number of Muslim states with his proposal for a 'commonwealth' of Muslim nations that could promote cooperation for the benefit of all Muslims. The idea was to materialise in April 1969, with the international Islamic conference meeting in Kuala Lumpur with the participation of about a hundred delegates from twenty-three countries. The conference dealt with many subjects, but it was marked by

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

the prevailing Muslim concern of the time, condemning the Israeli aggression against Muslims and the occupation of the Holy Places. It also decided that Muslim countries would work hard to promote trade and cultural cooperation among them. Religious topics were also at the heart of the conference deliberations. These included common issues such as family law and the vexed question of the sighting of the moon to herald the start of *Eid* religious holidays, with a view to establishing global celebrations that would start on the same day.¹⁵

In the 1960s Saudi initiatives were also under way, exploring all possibilities for reaching Islamic solidarity. These efforts were led by King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, who was an enthusiastic advocate of the idea. His enthusiasm was sustained by the Kingdom's participation in the Motamar and the persistent Arab advocacy for this cause by two leading personalities, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Al-Haj Amin Al-Husseini and Abdulrahman Azzam, the first Secretary General of the League of Arab States. Both belonged to a younger generation which had lived through and been affected by the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate. In 1962 King Faisal, then also Prime Minister, sponsored an important Islamic conference in Mecca to which delegates from various Muslim states were invited. One major outcome of this conference was the establishment of the Muslim World League (Rabitat Al-Alam Al-Islami), which became a large non-governmental Islamic organisation with branches in many countries.

A few years later, the sixth session of the Muslim World Congress (Motamar), which was held in Mogadishu in December 1964 and January 1965 and was inaugurated by the President of Somalia, Aden Abdullah Osman, proposed the creation of an intergovernmental organisation of Muslim countries and the convening of an Islamic summit. He echoed the call of King Faisal, who addressed the same session expressing his wish for an organisation for promoting cooperation and solidarity amongst Muslims. The event served as the spring-board from which King Faisal undertook an extensive international tour to Muslim capitals to rally support for the proposed Islamic summit. At each meeting he stressed the urgent need now commonly realised for Islamic solidarity and cooperation. To garner more support, the King addressed a Muslim World League conference in Mecca in April 1965 and praised and endorsed the proposal of the Somali President. He said, "We support the call for an Islamic summit conference to make it possible for the supreme powers in the Islamic world to

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

discuss Muslim affairs and by God's will, take decisions in their interest".¹⁶ The conference adopted a resolution expressing its support for King Faisal's call for holding an Islamic summit.

The Saudi, Pakistani, Malaysian and Arab initiatives were merely the highlights of a period of frenetic activity after the Second World War to institute a joint Islamic forum; they were concrete manifestations of a will and intent. In many respects, these initiatives were a continuation of activities begun earlier in the twentieth century; they all fostered the idea of union and solidarity and expedited the process that led to the OIC's establishment. Although the idea germinated at this time, and gained governmental momentum after the Second World, it would be a chain of international circumstances that provided the impetus for creation of a potent intergovernmental body.

The first Islamic Summit, founding conference of the OIC

The urgent imperative for an Islamic summit came after the occupation of Arab lands by Israel in the 1967 war. Seeing the Arab world in a difficult predicament, King Faisal renewed his call. Convening the summit became an urgent priority two years later when an arson attack by a fanatical Australian Jew on 21 August 1969 caused extensive damage to Islam's third holiest sanctuary, the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The attack caused shock waves and anger throughout the Muslim world. Al-Haj Amin Al-Husseini cabled all Muslim leaders the same day and requested them to convene an Islamic summit to deliberate upon the attack on the Mosque. King Faisal and King Hassan of Morocco became the sponsors of the summit which, it decided, would be held in Rabat, capital of Morocco.

Convening the summit, unsurprisingly, was not a problem-free matter. The political landscape of the 1960s Muslim world was very much characterised by the divisive imperatives of the Cold War, with Middle Eastern politics and diplomacy affected by intense tension stemming from different ideological and political orientations. It should therefore be no surprise to find some students of Middle East politics thinking of the OIC as a product of the 'Arab Cold War'. It may well be regarded so, as the 'Arab Cold War' split the regional system of the Middle East and North Africa into three competing camps, a regional scenario that only added complexity to the global picture of the bipolar Cold War; the three divisions were pro-US, pro-Soviet, and non-aligned. Nasserite

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

revolutionism and Baathist anti-monarchism (twin embodiments of secular republicanism with a dogmatic anti-Western edge) were by their very design destabilising for the status-quo-ist monarchies of the region.¹⁷ This question will be referred to again in the next chapter.

Attempts to stage an Islamic summit in 1969 were thus overshadowed by controversies and clashes springing from the uneasy relations between different camps in the region. The tense relations between President Nasser and King Faisal constituted a serious obstacle to the convening of the summit. Nevertheless, arduous diplomacy and intervention by different players managed to ease deeply-held positions and led, eventually, to agreement on holding the first Islamic summit.

Accordingly, a preparatory committee composed of Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia, Somalia, Pakistan and Niger held a meeting in Rabat on 8–9 September in order to prepare for the summit. The committee decided that the summit would meet in Rabat from 22 to 24 September 1969. Consequently, invitations issued by King Hassan II were sent to thirty-six countries.

The First Islamic Conference of the Kings and Heads of State and Government of the OIC Member States was opened as scheduled on 22 September 1969, with the participation of twenty-five countries. In addition to the tragedy of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the situation in Jerusalem, which is known to Muslims as Al-Quds in Arabic, the conference agenda included items such as cooperation among Muslim countries, adopting a common position on the issues discussed, and mechanisms for implementation of the resolutions. In other words, the First Islamic Summit went beyond its original purpose and set the stage for establishing a permanent international organisation.

The Summit's final communiqué condemned the Al-Aqsa Mosque arson and called for the restoration of Jerusalem or Al-Quds and its holy shrines to the status prior to the 1967 war. It also expressed Islamic support for liberating Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories. The Summit's final communiqué, moreover, declared that a meeting of foreign ministers of member countries should be held in March 1970 to discuss, amongst other things, the subject of 'establishing a permanent secretariat charged *inter alia* with the responsibility of making contacts with the Governments represented at the conference and co-ordinating their activities'.¹⁸

This founding conference of the OIC was historic not only because it established the first intergovernmental Islamic organisation of the

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

modern era; in addition, the decisions and compromises made at the forum—as explored in much detail in the following chapter—heralded a new era in which the ideological, theological and ethnic diversity of the Muslim world became an integral part of the nascent organisation’s decision making process.

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004

FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Composed of fifty-seven states, today the OIC represents over one-fourth of the membership of the United Nations and is the world's second largest international organisation. As a group, OIC countries account for one sixth of the world land area and more than one fifth of the total world population.¹ While the populations of most OIC countries are mainly Muslim in terms of their mainstream religious and cultural character, they hold different attitudes to religion in the sense that not all of them consider Islam as their official religion. Islam in this regard provides a source of likeness amongst the OIC Member States, which came together in an organisation based on the participation of sovereign states. Thus it is the nation state that is the principal unit in this organisation. Furthermore, the presence of African, Arab, Asian, European and Latin American countries in its large membership gives it a diversified geographical composition.

While the arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969 precipitated the convening of the first Islamic Summit, and thus heralded the start of the OIC's establishment, its consolidation as a fully fledged inter-governmental organisation took a long process of institutionalisation. Once launched, the OIC was soon expected to address a wide range of national and regional issues as well as the common Muslim causes, and also take up issues of global concern such as disarmament, combating terrorism, and the environment. These and other issues of concern increasingly characterised the OIC's activities over the decades.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Over the course of its history, many OIC Summits and Ministerial Conferences served as milestones that established the Organisation's sprawling agenda and its subsequent institutional development. This chapter will explore these milestones and chart the growth and consolidation in its first evolutionary phase.

The formative years

The First Islamic Summit held in Rabat in 1969 laid the ground for the establishment of the OIC. It was formative in its ability to marshal disparate and often opposing viewpoints on the nature of the new organisation's membership, its formation and the positions it would assume. Indeed, even the convening of the Summit needed tremendous efforts by the Kingdom of Morocco as well as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to a number of other influential Member States. Thirty-six countries were invited, but twenty-five attended; not all were agreed as to who should take part in the forum. A number of participating countries opposed the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the Summit on the grounds that Palestine was not a sovereign state. However, several other leaders rejected this argument by questioning the logic of discussing the issue of Al-Quds in the absence of Palestinian participation. The Algerian President Houari Boumédienne, moreover, reminded the conference that Algeria's National Front (FLN) represented Algeria at the 1955 Bandung Non-Aligned Summit even though Algeria was then not yet a sovereign state. Consequently, the Summit, after demands by a number of participating delegations, admitted the PLO as an observer.

A preparatory meeting was held at foreign minister level so as to set the agenda of the Summit. Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iran and Turkey favoured a restricted agenda confined to the discussion of the Al-Aqsa Mosque arson and avoiding discussion on the Arab-Israeli conflict in its totality. Egypt, Algeria and other states insisted on addressing all aspects of the Palestinian cause. In order to avoid placing the entire Summit in jeopardy, a compromise was reached by which the preparatory meeting agreed to place on the agenda the tragedy of the Al-Aqsa Mosque; the situation in Jerusalem; withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Occupied Territories; and the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people and full support for their national liberation struggle.² The Summit also took up institutional and procedural mat-

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

ters such as the implementation of its resolutions and the scheduling of subsequent foreign ministers' conferences, an agreement on cooperation amongst Muslim countries and the adoption of collective positions on issues of common concern.

Therefore the Summit went beyond its originally predetermined purpose; it tackled a wide range of issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and set the ground for creating a permanent intergovernmental organisation, the OIC. In its final communiqué, the Summit thus declared its position on the issues of Al-Quds, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, a position that was to be consistently maintained at subsequent conferences dealing with the subject. The Summit stated that the continued threat to the sacred shrines of Islam in Jerusalem/Al-Quds was the result of the occupation of the city by the Israeli forces, and that the preservation of their sacred character and unimpeded access to them required that the Holy City should be returned to its pre-June 1967 status. It articulated the firm determination of the governments and peoples to reject any solution to the problem of Palestine that would deny Jerusalem the status it had before June 1967. The Summit also declared its most profound concern at the continued military occupation of Arab territories by Israel which began in June 1967 and the refusal by Israel to pay the slightest heed to the calls by the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations to rescind the measures purporting to annex the Holy City of Jerusalem to Israel. The delegates affirmed their full support to the Palestinian people for the restitution of their rights which had been usurped, and in their struggle for national liberation. They reaffirmed their adherence to the principle of peace, but peace with honour and justice.³ The Summit also decided that the foreign ministers of member countries should convene a meeting—fixing a date for March 1970—to discuss the results of the common action that participating countries would have taken by then at the international level in the light of the Summit resolutions, and to discuss the establishment of a permanent secretariat, charged with the responsibility of making contacts with governments represented at the Summit and coordinating their activities.⁴

This very first Summit scored achievements of historic importance. At a time when it was unthinkable to do so, the Summit succeeded in bringing together politically and ideologically diverse Muslim countries, achieving a goal pursued for several decades. It laid the ground for the establishment of the OIC, for fostering cooperation amongst

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Muslim countries, and it adopted, for the first time at this highest of official levels, a collective Muslim position on the issue of Al-Quds and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

The First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), held in Jeddah in March 1970, proved a significant initial milestone in the process of establishing the OIC. Attended by representatives of twenty-two countries, the conference institutionalised itself to meet once a year to review the progress achieved in the implementation of its decisions, discuss matters of common interest and make recommendations for common action. The conference decided to create a General Secretariat that would act as liaison between the participating states, follow up the implementation of decisions taken, in particular those regarding the problem of Palestine, and organise the conference sessions. It decided that the headquarters of the Secretariat would be in Jeddah pending the liberation of Jerusalem. The conference also decided to appoint a Secretary General for a two-year period, to be chosen by Malaysia.⁵ Thus the Organisation was formally established.

The Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

The Second Foreign Ministers Conference was held in Karachi in December 1970, attended by twenty-three countries. Malaysia nominated its former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, as the first Secretary General of the OIC, and this was agreed upon by the conference. In addition to discussing political issues such as the cause of Palestine and Portugal's aggression against Guinea, the conference considered several agenda items related to the structure and consolidation of the OIC. It adopted the first budget of the General Secretariat and studied a proposal for establishing an International Islamic Bank for Trade Development submitted by Pakistan. Most important, the conference laid the basis for the OIC Charter by initiating discussion on its draft.

The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Jeddah in March 1972, was perhaps the most significant in the formation of the

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

OIC, as it was this forum that adopted the draft Charter of the OIC. This was a historic achievement as it laid the formal foundations of the OIC, and defined its objectives and structure. The agenda also adopted by the conference indicated that the OIC was expanding the scope of its work and covering a larger range of issues. In addition to the question of Al-Quds and Palestine, it expressed the Islamic states' solidarity with the African peoples struggling against imperialism and racism and addressed political issues such as the conditions of Muslims in the Philippines and the situation in the India-Pakistan region. As well as approving the OIC Charter, the conference undertook additional institutional decisions by setting up the first agencies of the OIC. Although the conference was not able to agree on the establishment of the International Islamic Bank for Trade Development, as suggested by its agenda, it decided to set up within the Secretariat a financial and economic department to serve the Muslim world in undertaking research and giving advice on economic matters and on Islamic banking. The conference stated that such a department would be the nucleus of a specialised agency in the financial and economic fields. The conference, moreover, approved the establishment of the International Islamic News Agency, charged with disseminating the latest developments from the Muslim world. It also recommended a study of ways to set up an Islamic research centre for cultural studies, and the establishment of an Islamic university open to everyone where all academic subjects would be taught.⁶

The Second Islamic Summit

The achievements of the Foreign Ministers' Conference in 1973 provided the necessary momentum for the OIC to take shape. As with the first Islamic Summit of 1969, the 1973 Conference also took place amid further tumultuous international events that affected the Middle East in particular, giving extra reasons for the OIC to consolidate. The 1973 Arab-Israeli War paved the way for further cooperation amongst Muslim states. The war brought about significant changes in the balance of power in the region and created new patterns of alignments. Political and ideological differences between several Muslim states were played down. A mood of solidarity and cooperation started to prevail between several Arab states. This was reflected in the improvement of relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan, Iraq and Iran. Moreover, in solidarity, most African states broke off their relations with Israel during or soon after the war.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Against the backdrop of these developments, the Second Islamic Summit was held in February 1974 in Lahore, Pakistan. In addition to the issue of Palestine and Jerusalem, the Summit had a special focus on economic cooperation amongst Member States, especially in the light of economic hardships facing several countries, worsened by the increase in oil prices and the resulting energy crisis. But because of the very same 'oil boom', the mid-1970s also saw the establishment of major international investment and development funds by oil exporting countries which were to extend assistance in various forms to economically underdeveloped countries in the later years. Thus the 1973 and 1979 oil price rises indirectly contributed to the development of economic cooperation within the OIC.

Another factor contributing to this development was the reinforcement of the concept of South-North cooperation that came to dominate the international discourse of the 1970s. The Lahore Summit was responsive to these developments. The Summit also decided to establish a special fund 'to be called an Islamic Solidarity Fund to meet the needs and requirements for Islamic unity, Islamic causes, enhancement of Islamic culture and values and universities.'⁷

On the cause of Palestine, the Summit reiterated the OIC's support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and reaffirmed that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. It requested Member States to provide all facilities for opening of PLO offices where there were none yet.

A mood of reconciliation prevailed throughout the Summit between those Muslim countries distrustful of each other. The OIC used its good offices to settle some such issues, including enabling Pakistan and Bangladesh to exchange recognition and Jordan to recognise the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

The Lahore Summit marked continuity for the OIC, which had achieved a good degree of stability by holding regular meetings. Moreover, the OIC agenda acquired more specific characteristics and the Organisation started a process of branching out to other like-minded institutions and centres in different fields.

The ensuing summits and other conferences, while continuing to discuss urgent issues confronting the Muslim world, also continued to serve as a point of reflection and further consolidation for the OIC. Key OIC fora that allowed the OIC to continue its growth are highlighted below.

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

The Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

In May 1976, Istanbul became the host of the seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. It was another milestone as it served as an opportunity to review and evaluate the implementation of resolutions of previous OIC ministerial meetings on mutual trade, investment and technical cooperation amongst Member States. Delegates recognised that economic cooperation between OIC Member States required the establishment of specialised institutions capable of providing studies and data about socio-economic conditions and capacities in Muslim countries. The conference thus decided to establish in Ankara the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries.

It also resolved to set up a subsidiary organ within the OIC to further cultural understanding between the member countries on the basis of their common civilisational heritage. Consequently, the conference decided—after a proposal by the Turkish delegation—to establish the Research Centre on Islamic History, Art and Culture in Istanbul.⁸

This was also the first conference in which the United Nations achieved OIC Observer status, allowing it to be a participant in the OIC's Summits and Ministerial Conferences. An Agreement for Cooperation between the UN and the OIC was signed the same year, as a general framework of cooperation between the two and their respective organs and agencies.

The Third Islamic Summit

The Third Islamic Summit was opened in Mecca in January 1981 and then moved to the nearby city of Taif, in Saudi Arabia. This Summit was described as the 'Palestine and Al-Quds Session' and was attended by thirty-eight countries. The Summit adopted a number of important resolutions, most notably on the establishment of the post of Assistant Secretary General for Palestine and Al-Quds at the General Secretariat, to coordinate the efforts on the cause of Palestine. It also decided that an Islamic Bureau for the boycott of Israel should be established at the General Secretariat.

Like the two fora that preceded it, the Summit was held against the backdrop of important developments in the Muslim world. In addition to the developments in Palestine and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of Camp David, the Iraq-Iran war and the Soviet invasion of Afghani-

stan were also major political items on the Summit agenda. With regard to the Iraq-Iran war, the Summit expressed its deep concern over the conflict and reiterated the insistence of the OIC on accelerated efforts to put an end to it; it called on the two conflicting parties to cease fire immediately.

With regard to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Summit addressed the matter with great concern as the military occupation of an OIC Member State by a non-member country required a decisive response from the Muslim world. The OIC called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and formed a ministerial committee on Afghanistan, consisting of the OIC Secretary General and the Foreign Ministers of Guinea, Iran, Pakistan, and Tunisia. The Summit directed the committee to continue its efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the problem and to cooperate with the UN Secretary General, who was also attending the Taif Conference.

Perhaps reflecting significant progress in the field since the preceding Summit, the subject of economic cooperation among the Member States also enjoyed a special focus at the Taif Conference. The Summit noted with concern the worsening economic problems faced by developing countries as a result of the crises in international economic relations, further widening the gap between developing and advanced countries. The Summit considered that economic cooperation among Member States, in particular, constituted 'an effective instrument for promoting their unity in pursuit of the establishment of the new international economic order.'⁹ Accordingly, it took a giant step by approving a 'Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation Among the Member States' and requested the OIC General Secretariat to speedily take the appropriate steps for implementation of this plan. The Plan identified ten priority economic fields in which studies and joint action would be undertaken and cited a number of specific sectors and areas of cooperation under each. The main fields were: food and agriculture; trade; industry; transport, communications and tourism; financial and monetary questions; energy; science and technology; manpower and social affairs; population and health; technical cooperation. The priority sectors were redefined and a strategy of implementation was developed later in the 1990s, as will be reviewed in Chapter 9. The Summit furthermore decided to establish the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade as a subsidiary organ, to be located in Morocco.

In the history of the OIC's institutional development, the Third Summit is remembered for establishing its standing committees and

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

organs. Three standing committees were set up, each to be headed by a Head of State—the Standing Committees for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) and for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC).

The Third Summit also decided to establish a Fiqh Academy whose ‘membership shall consist of religious scholars and intellectuals in various cultural, scientific, social and economic disciplines from various parts of the Islamic world, to study problems of contemporary life and to engage in original effective *ijtihad* with a view to providing solutions, derived from Islamic tradition and taking into account developments in Islamic thought, for these problems.’¹⁰ The Summit, moreover, approved the establishment of an Islamic Court of Justice and the convening of a Committee of Experts from the Member States to lay down the statute of the Court. The function and role of the committees and organs will be explored in further detail later on in this chapter.

This Summit issued the Mecca Declaration which expressed the positions of Muslim leaders on a variety of issues. The Declaration stressed the determination of the leaders to ‘reinforce solidarity, to overcome rifts and divisions and to settle in a peaceful manner all disputes that may arise amongst us on the basis of covenants and the principles of brotherhood, unity and inter-dependence.’ It also reaffirmed the firm support of the *Ummah* with regard to the national rights and struggle of the people of Palestine. It expressed deep concern over ‘the increasing rivalry between the Superpowers, their competition for spheres of influence and their increasing endeavours to intensify their military presence in the areas near and adjacent to the states of the Islamic world, such as the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Gulf.’ It also declared determination to eliminate poverty in the Muslim world by consolidating economic cooperation. The Mecca Declaration expressed support for the OIC and determination to provide it with appropriate skills and adequate resources, so that it could discharge the tasks assigned to it.¹¹

The Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers

The Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Riyadh in 1989, constituted a major milestone in the OIC structuring process. The conference’s resolution on the functioning of the OIC and

its subsidiary and affiliated bodies was a highly significant step in the structuring process as it laid down important regulations for the OIC that provided its guiding principles for the decades to come. The conference, for example, entrusted the Secretary General with the 'task of formulating a conception on ways and means of implementing a comprehensive strategy for joint Islamic action on the basis of the Declaration of Makkah and the Plan of Action adopted by the Third Islamic Summit Conference.' This 'conception would include a proposal for priority programmes in all sectors of joint Islamic action, together with a proposal for the appropriate tasks to be carried out in this context by the General Secretariat and OIC subsidiary organs and affiliated institutions'.¹² The conference also decided on several structural reforms that regulated the relationship between the different OIC agencies. The authorities of the Secretary General, according to this resolution, were significantly increased and he was mandated to take necessary restructuring steps to put the OIC's house in order. This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Membership development

The geographical distribution of the OIC Member States reveals that twenty-seven of them are in Africa, twenty-six in Asia, two in Europe and two in Latin America. At the first Summit in Rabat in 1969, the number of participating countries was only twenty-five; among these, North Yemen and South Yemen were united on 22 May 1990, and Bangladesh separated from Pakistan and became independent in 1971. Senegal participated in the First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which was held in 1970 in pursuance of the resolution of the Rabat Summit. The representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) had attended as observers. Although representatives of the Muslim Community of India were among the participants of the First Summit, they did not attend the subsequent meetings of the Organisation.

With twenty-five countries in the first forum, the OIC's membership quickly swelled in the subsequent years. Six countries joined the OIC in 1972 (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Sierra Leone, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates). Another group of eight states followed suit in 1974 (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Palestine [now admitted as a full member, having had Observer

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Table 1. Founding states of the OIC

1. Afghanistan	10. Lebanon	19. Somalia
2. Algeria	11. Libya	20. Sudan
3. Chad	12. Malaysia	21. Tunisia
4. Egypt	13. Mali	22. Turkey
5. Guinea	14. Mauritania	23. Southern Yemen
6. Indonesia	15. Morocco	24. Yemen Arab Republic
7. Iran	16. Niger	(25. Muslim Community of India)
8. Jordan	17. Pakistan	
9. Kuwait	18. Saudi Arabia	

status before] and Uganda). The year 1975 witnessed the joining of two countries (Iraq and the Maldives), bringing the number of Member States to forty. New members were added during the second half of 1970s with the Comoros joining in 1976 and Djibouti in 1978. During the following decade, three countries joined, Benin (in 1983), Brunei Darussalam (in 1984) and Nigeria (in 1986); and at the end of the 1980s, the number of the Member States stood at forty-five.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991, and the establishment of newly independent states mostly in Central Asia, brought new members to the Organisation at the beginning of 1990s. Azerbaijan joined the OIC in 1991, followed by Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in 1992, Kazakhstan in 1995 and Uzbekistan in 1996.

The membership of the OIC is also noteworthy for the participation of non-governmental bodies. At its inception, the first Islamic Summit took the unprecedented step of incorporating a non-state entity, the Muslim community of India, as a founding member of the Organisation, even though the community did not attend or become involved in subsequent OIC fora. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), on the other hand, was an Observer from 1969 till 1974, when it became a full member.

Structural consolidation

The OIC is marked out not simply by acting as a diplomatic forum to articulate common Muslim concerns. Member States have also declared aspirations for the OIC that will foster meaningful socio-economic and cultural change in the Muslim world. Both activities are

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Table 2. Accession years of OIC Member States

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date Joined</i>	<i>OIC Forum in which the country became a member</i>
Islamic State of AFGHANISTAN People's Democratic Republic of ALGERIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of CHAD	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Arab Republic of EGYPT	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of GUINEA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of INDONESIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Islamic Republic of IRAN	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Hashemite Kingdom of JORDAN	1969	Founding Member Rabat
State of KUWAIT	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of LEBANON	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Socialist People's LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRYA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
MALAYSIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of MALI	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Islamic Republic of MAURITANIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Kingdom of MOROCCO	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of NIGER	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Islamic Republic of PAKISTAN	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Kingdom of SAUDI ARABIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of SOMALIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of SUDAN	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of TUNISIA	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of TURKEY	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of YEMEN	1969	Founding Member Rabat
Republic of SENEGAL	1970	1 st ICFM Jeddah
Kingdom of BAHRAIN	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
Sultanate of OMAN	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
State of QATAR	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
Republic of SIERRA LEONE	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
SYRIAN Arab Republic	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
State of the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1972	3 rd ICFM Jeddah
People's Republic of BANGLADESH	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit Lahore
BURKINA FASO	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit Lahore
Republic of CAMEROON	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit Lahore
Republic of GABON	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit Lahore

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Republic of The GAMBIA	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit	Lahore
Republic of GUINEA-BISSAU	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit	Lahore
State of PALESTINE	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit	Lahore
Republic of UGANDA	1974	2 nd Islamic Summit	Lahore
Republic of IRAQ	1975	6 th ICFM	Jeddah
Republic of MALDIVES	1975	6 th ICFM	Jeddah
Union of COMOROS	1976	7 th ICFM	Istanbul
Republic of DJIBOUTI	1978	9 th ICFM	Dakar
Republic of BENIN	1983	14 th ICFM	Dhaka
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	1984	4 th Islamic Summit	Casablanca
Federal Republic of NIGERIA	1986	16 th ICFM	Fez
Republic of AZERBAIJAN	1991	6 th Islamic Summit	Dakar
Republic of TURKMENISTAN	1992	5 th Extraordinary ICFM	Istanbul
Republic of ALBANIA	1992	6 th Extraordinary ICFM	Jeddah
KYRGYZ Republic	1992	6 th Extraordinary ICFM	Jeddah
Republic of TAJIKISTAN	1992	6 th Extraordinary ICFM	Jeddah
Republic of MOZAMBIQUE	1994	22 nd ICFM	Casablanca
Republic of KAZAKHSTAN	1995	23 rd ICFM	Conakry
Republic of SURINAME	1996	24 th ICFM	Jakarta
Republic of UZBEKISTAN	1996	Annual Coord. Meeting ¹³	New York
Republic of TOGO	1997	Annual Coord. Meeting	New York
Republic of GUYANA	1998	Annual Coord. Meeting	New York
Republic of COTE d'IVOIRE	2001	28 th ICFM	Bamako

described as ‘joint Islamic action’, which aims to establish co-operation, if not common action, on priorities identified by Member States. The OIC General Secretariat began with a small organisation and a modest brief to ensure practical arrangements for holding OIC conferences. The Secretariat’s work gradually expanded with the Third Summit in 1981 at Mecca, as has been described, after it was declared that the OIC should also give attention to strengthening economic and commercial cooperation amongst the Member States. The Organisation thus branched out of its third structural tier and established three standing committees and several subsidiary organs, together with spe-

cialised and affiliated institutions working in various fields, under the rubric of joint Islamic action. What follows is a brief account of these agencies and their work in areas of economic activity, culture, legal matters and information dissemination.¹⁴

Standing Committees

The three Standing Committees—for Scientific and Technological Cooperation, for Economic and Commercial Cooperation, and for Information and Cultural Affairs—were instructed to follow up resolutions of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and explore avenues of cooperation amongst the Member States in their respective fields. In the deliberations that preceded the 1981 Summit's decision to set up these Standing Committees, detailed guidelines were set as to the geographical composition of these bodies. The Summit decided that each Committee should consist of the representatives of ten Islamic states, at ministerial level, and should be chaired by the Head of a Member State. The Summit resolution, moreover, stipulated that members of these Standing Committees should be elected by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers for a term of three years renewable once. This aspect was significantly changed when, at the Fifth Islamic Summit in Kuwait in 1987, it was resolved that all Member States of the OIC would enjoy the membership of the Standing Committees.

Chairmanships of the Standing Committees were distributed along the lines of the OIC geographical groups, African, Asian and Arab. According to this approach, on the establishment of the Committees the chairmanship of the Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) was assigned to Pakistan and that of the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC) was assigned to Senegal. However, no Arab Member State expressed interest in chairing the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), and so the Summit took no decision on the matter.

This meant that the chairmanship of the COMCEC was deferred to the following Summit. During that time I was the Director General of the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture in Istanbul (IRCICA), an OIC organ with headquarters in Istanbul. Having discovered that the leadership of COMCEC was left vacant, I proposed

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

to the late Turgut Özal, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey (and later Prime Minister in 1983), that in this situation, Turkey could assume the chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Economic and Commercial Cooperation. The Fourth Islamic Summit, which was held in Casablanca in January 1984, provided another opportunity to decide on the Committee's chairmanship; Turkey expressed its interest in chairing COMCEC and the Summit endorsed the proposal, and so the President of Turkey became the Chairman of COMCEC.

It has to be noted here that a fourth Committee, the Al-Quds Committee, was established earlier by the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Jeddah, 1975), and King Hassan II of Morocco became its chairman. The establishment of the Al-Quds Committee underlined the importance of the issue of Al-Quds for the OIC.

The Standing Committees became functional at different dates. While COMIAC became operational after its first meeting, held in Dakar, in January 1983, COMSTECH started functioning in May 1983. COMCEC held its first meeting in Istanbul in November 1984. Today its chairmanship remains unchanged and its activities continue under the original work structures.

All these Committees are responsible for pursuing the strategic priorities as identified by the Member States. Their brief also includes a requirement to examine ways for strengthening cooperation amongst Member States and to put forward proposals for improving Member States' capabilities in the Committees' respective areas of specialty.

Subsidiary Organs

Subsidiary organs are established within the framework of the Organisation by decision of the Islamic Summit or Foreign Ministers conferences. All OIC Member States automatically become members of the subsidiaries.

– Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF)

The decision to establish the Islamic Solidarity Fund was taken by the Second Islamic Summit, held in Lahore in 1974. The ISF became functional in 1976 after contributions had been made by a number of Member States. The Eleventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which was held in Islamabad in 1980, established a special *Waqf*

(endowment) with the aim of strengthening the financial position of the Fund, making it an endowment with no mandatory contribution by Member States.¹⁵ The ISF's Statute stipulates that its sources of finance come from contributions by Member States, donations and grants by public or private institutions and individuals, and revenue from the Fund's *Waqf*. The Fund, which has headquarters in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, is run by an executive body and is led by an Executive Director appointed by the Secretary General. The activities of the ISF span a wide variety of fields such as providing different kinds of philanthropic assistance to Member States in the event of humanitarian emergencies, supporting academic institutions in the Muslim world, and funding seminars and scholarly studies in different areas.

– Statistical, Economic, Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC, changed to SESRIC)¹⁶

SESRTCIC started to operate in 1978, principally to assist socio-economic cooperation for development among the Member States. This was to be achieved through activities in the areas of statistics collection and dissemination, research, training, and the fostering of expert exchanges among member countries in various sectors of economic activity including agriculture, industry, international trade, and labour.

From its inception, the Centre rendered indispensable services by publishing specialised research findings and statistics on economic and development issues. It also organised tailored training programmes in selected fields, geared to needs expressed by Member States. In particular, these programmes aimed to upgrade the theoretical and technical skills of administrative and professional staff in various fields such as national planning systems and methods, conducting statistical censuses, and policy-making. The Centre's research and training programmes allowed Member States to discover how they complement each other in these fields and helped further mutual understanding. It convened ministerial and expert meetings on economic cooperation in the areas specified in the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation Among the Member States, which was adopted by the Third Islamic Summit in 1981. The Centre has since been producing reports relating to the Member States' economic development and external economic relations.

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

– Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)

IRCICA started its activities in 1979 as the first cultural organ of the OIC system. The Centre adopted authentic research schemes and devised innovative long-term programmes towards promoting a deeper and accurate understanding of Islamic civilisation and Muslim cultures. It was also charged with developing channels of cultural cooperation between Member States and with other countries and communities. Its long-term research programmes on the primary sources and products of Islamic culture yielded world bibliographies on translations of the Holy Quran and the history of the sciences in Islam.

IRCICA also established congresses and publications focusing on the history and heritage of Islamic civilisation in the various regional and cultural capitals of the world. This became a permanent feature in its activities, with over sixty academic congresses held around the world and 122 editions of books published and translated into several languages on a variety of subjects. Also noteworthy are the ten-year programmes of architectural workshops where practitioners from around the world came together in Istanbul, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Al-Quds to work on the study and preservation of Islamic urban heritage in its multicultural environment. The Centre also established a library specialising in Islamic culture and civilisation, containing 60,000 volumes of books in 140 languages, incunabula and rare books of Islamic culture, 1,500 titles of periodicals, valuable manuscripts, and thousands of articles, maps and microfilms. The scale and depth of its activities meant that in many respects, the work of the IRCICA established the OIC's presence in both OIC and non-OIC countries for the first time—thus helping the Organisation as a whole to establish and deepen relations.

In addition to its own mandate the Centre was made the Secretariat and Executive Organ of another OIC subsidiary, the International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage (ICPICH), which functioned from 1983 to 2000; this will be discussed later. IRCICA's proposal to institute an international calligraphy competition as a periodical event was met with appreciation by the Commission and implemented under the latter's work programmes. Since the Commission's merger with IRCICA the competition has been organised by IRCICA; so have the other activities that were instituted within the framework of ICPICH.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

- International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA)

The Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA) later named the “International Islamic Fiqh Academy”, was created by the Third Islamic Summit held in Mecca and Taif in 1981. It is based in Jeddah, and its members are expert jurists and scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and various other sciences. The objectives of the Academy are to achieve the theoretical and practical unity of the Islamic *Ummah*, through adherence to Islamic jurisprudence at all levels; and to study problems of contemporary life and undertake an authentic and effective analysis thereof, so as to provide solutions based on Islamic jurisprudence. Within the framework of the current intensive transformation in the OIC system, the Fiqh Academy—as will be further discussed in the following chapters—is witnessing a parallel process of reform and restructuring with the aim of turning it into an active organ capable of realising the envisioned objectives.

- Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade (ICDT)

Located in Casablanca in Morocco, the Centre came into being after it was approved at the Third Islamic Summit in 1981 and was officially launched in 1983. The main objectives of the ICDT are to encourage regular trade exchanges among Member States; to promote investment likely to develop trade; to contribute to the promotion of Member States’ products and encourage access to foreign markets; to promote trade information; to assist Member States in the fields of trade promotion and international negotiations; and to extend assistance to enterprises and economic operators. The ICDT budget is financed through annual contributions from OIC Member States in addition to revenues from services provided by the Centre and donations.

- Islamic University of Technology

The University, based in Dhaka, was initially named the Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research (ICTVTR) when it was promulgated at the Ninth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Dakar, 1978) and later, the “Islamic Institute of Technology”. It was renamed the Islamic University of Technology by decision of the Twenty-eighth Foreign Ministers Conference (Bamako, 2001). The main objective of the University is to help the human resources development of the OIC Member States in engineering, technology, techni-

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

cal and vocational education. It conducts programmes to promote and guide research in industrial and technological fields, to enhance technical cooperation, to exchange technical know-how, and to disseminate basic information in the field of human resource development through courses, seminars, workshops and publications. The Institute also gives due consideration to ensuring coordination between the objective of the University and other national and regional institutions of the Member States, as well as international institutions.

– Islamic Universities of Niger and Uganda

The Second Islamic Summit (Lahore, 1974) resolved to establish two Islamic universities as OIC subsidiary organs; the Islamic University of Niger and the Islamic University in Uganda subsequently opened their gates in 1986 and 1988 respectively. In addition, two other independent universities enjoy the OIC's sponsorship: the International Islamic University Malaysia and the Islamic University of Bangladesh.

– Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD)

The Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Jeddah, 1975) decided to establish the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD) to promote and encourage cooperation in science and technology and to provide advice and carry out scientific studies for the OIC. The Foundation started its activities in 1983. Regrettably, IFSTAD did not live up to the expectations that inspired its creation. Its shaky performance and its inability to make the anticipated contribution necessitated an in-depth critique of IFSTAD and, at a COMSTECH meeting held in Islamabad in December 1997, the decision was taken to dissolve IFSTAD.

– International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage (ICPICH)

ICPICH was established in accordance with its statute adopted by the Thirteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Niamey, 1982). Its Secretariat and Executive Organ was IRCICA. It had a Liaison and Coordination Bureau under its Chairman in Riyadh. The Director

General of IRCICA was at the same time the Secretary of ICPICH. The Commission was composed of thirteen scholars and specialists appointed by the Member States: nine of them were the members of the Governing Board of IRCICA serving as ex—officio members in the Commission. It met four times from 1983 to 1987. After the demise of its Chairman, and on the recommendation of its members, the Commission was merged with IRCICA by decision of the Twenty-seventh Foreign Ministers Conference (Kuala Lumpur, June 2000). Its work programmes were incorporated into those of IRCICA. The work programmes of ICPICH which were proposed and implemented by IRCICA have innovative activities in their record, such as the first five of the triennial calligraphy competitions, the King Fahd Awards Competition for Design and Research in Islamic Architecture (1986), and the photography competition on the occasion of Islamic Heritage Year (1986).

– World Centre for Islamic Education

The Ninth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers entrusted the General Secretariat with a feasibility study on establishment of an Islamic centre for education and culture. Consequently, the General Secretariat submitted its recommendations on the matter to the Tenth Foreign Ministers Conference (Fez, 1979) which decided to establish a World Centre for Islamic Education to be based in Mecca, to conduct educational research and undertake all other activities that would improve education in Muslim countries. Its statute was adopted by the following year. In 1982, Saudi Arabia proposed attaching the World Centre for Islamic Education to Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca and expressed willingness to finance its operation. The Thirteenth Foreign Ministers Conference (Niamey, 1982) agreed to the Saudi proposal and invited the Centre to maintain cooperation with other OIC organs in respect of the curricula for Islamic education. The Centre later cut its relations with the OIC; it was attached to the Institute for Research and Revival of Islamic Heritage, and its name was changed to Centre for Research in Islamic Education.

Specialised Institutions

Specialised institutions are established within the framework of the Organisation by decision of the Islamic Summit or Foreign Ministers

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

conferences. Membership of the specialised institutions is optional and open to members of the Organisation.

– International Islamic News Agency (IINA)

This agency was set up as the first OIC institution by a decision of OIC Foreign Ministers in 1970. Launched in 1972, IINA is based in Jeddah, and has the objective of developing close and better relations between the Member States in exchanging news, promoting contacts and technical cooperation between the news agencies of Member States, and working to create a better understanding of Muslim peoples and their political, economic and social problems. IINA failed to carry on any significant activity and contributed very little to joint Islamic action in achieving the goals envisioned at the time of its establishment. However, in the context of the ongoing reform and transformation of OIC's structures and operations, IINA has undergone considerable changes towards fulfilling its objectives.

– Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation (ISBO)

ISBO, based in Jeddah, was established in 1975 by the Sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. The purpose was to promote Muslim causes, foster cooperation between Member States through radio and television programmes, and promote awareness of the Islamic heritage in the world. It is unfortunate that ISBO, too, has contributed very little to joint Islamic action. It has been no more than an inactive federation of the broadcasting institutions in the Member States. Currently ISBO is set to be one of the key institutions to benefit from the ongoing reform process of the OIC, a process that will be explained in the subsequent chapters.

– Islamic Development Bank (IDB)

After examining two proposals submitted by Pakistan and Egypt for the establishment of an Islamic bank, the Second Foreign Ministers Conference (Karachi, 1970) commissioned Egypt to undertake a comprehensive study on this project. The Egyptian study was placed before the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Jeddah, 1972) and submitted for further studies; the Second Conference of Finance Min-

isters held in 1974 decided to establish the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to foster the economic development and social progress of Muslim countries.

The Bank's work was to be driven by three strategic objectives: the promotion of Islamic financial industry and institutions, poverty alleviation, and the promotion of cooperation amongst member countries. To realise these objectives, the IDB programmes and activities focus on the following priority areas: human development; agricultural development and food security; infrastructure development, trade among member countries; private sector development; and research and development (R & D) in Islamic economics, banking and finance.¹⁷

Since its inception, the IDB has financed, wholly or partially, thousands of projects throughout the Muslim world. It extends financing to member countries for those infrastructural and agricultural projects—in both public and private sectors—that have had an impact on the economic and social development of the Member States and are accorded priority by the governments concerned. The IDB has also given Member States technical assistance for investments, development, management and know-how. In addition, the Bank has played a prominent role in developing the fields of Islamic economics and Islamic banking through research and training. Its Islamic Research Training Institute (IRTI) has carried out several studies and published numerous papers and reports on a number of vital topics related to development in the Member States. Moreover, education in the Member States has been significantly aided by the IDB through merit scholarships for advanced studies in several domains. The IDB Special Assistance Programme assists Muslim communities in non-member countries. It helps in developing and strengthening institutions involved in education, social and health services, to improve the well-being of Muslim peoples and preserve their Islamic and cultural identity. It also aims at alleviating the suffering of communities afflicted by natural disasters or conflicts in both member and non-member countries.

The Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit, held in Mecca on 7–8 December 2005, called for a substantial increase in the capital stock of the IDB, to enable it to strengthen its role in providing financial support and technical assistance to its member countries. Subsequently, the Board of Governors of the IDB, at its Thirty-first Annual Meeting held in 2006 in Kuwait, decided to increase the authorised capital stock of the IDB by 15 billion Islamic dinars to 30

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

billion Islamic dinars, and the subscribed capital by 6.9 billion to 15 billion Islamic dinars.¹⁸

– Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO)

ISESCO was established by the Tenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Fez, 1979) and endorsed by the Third Islamic Summit in 1981. Its headquarters are in Rabat. Its establishment charter specified that ISESCO should work towards complementing and supplementing the work of the OIC institutions in education, science and culture. In the field of education, ISESCO launched several projects that aim at strengthening literacy efforts within the framework of education for all; enhancing the educational systems in the Member States; and gearing higher education towards comprehensive development. In the cultural domain, ISESCO has joined the collective OIC efforts in challenging misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, in addition to supporting cultural institutions in the Muslim world. In the field of science, ISESCO has been active in providing research grants to different universities and research centres in various scientific fields. ISESCO carries out its activities within the framework of three-year action plans as well as long-term strategies.

Affiliated Institutions

Some entities or bodies whose objectives are in line with the objectives of this Charter are recognised as affiliated institutions by the Conference of Foreign Ministers. Membership of the institutions is optional and open to organs and institutions of the Member States.

– Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI)

The Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry represents the private sector of fifty-seven member countries. The idea of its establishment was formulated by the Seventh Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in 1976 in Istanbul. A First Conference of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, held in 1977 in Istanbul, approved the idea. The ICCI aims at strengthening closer collaboration in the fields of trade, commerce, information technology, insurance/reinsurance, shipping, banking, promotion of investment opportunities and joint ventures in the

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

member countries. Its members are the national Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Member States. The headquarters of the ICCI are in Karachi. It has expanded its activities since the adoption of the Ten-Year Programme of Action by the Third Extraordinary Summit held in Mecca in 2005.

- Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF)

The Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) was established by a resolution of the Eleventh Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Islamabad in 1980, and reaffirmed by the Third Islamic Summit held in Mecca/Taif in 1981. The ISSF became operational in 1985. The ISSF aims to strengthen Islamic solidarity amongst youth in the Member States and promote Islamic identity in sport. It also strives to introduce OIC goals to young people in Member States, and to boost cooperation among Member States on matters of common interest in all fields of sport, as well as fostering Islamic coordination in international and regional Olympic and other sporting events. It has also aimed to pay due attention to sport education, health and recreation, as well as encouraging sports tourism and promoting sports culture. The ISSF has its headquarters in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia.

- Organisation of the Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA)

Considering that international relations in the fields of transport and communications offer good possibilities for economic and commercial cooperation, in addition to fostering common interest and mutual benefits, the Third Islamic Summit (Mecca, 1981) decided to set up the Organisation of the Islamic Shipowners Association (OISA) and approved its statute. The OISA was created to help and coordinate the efforts of cooperation among the maritime companies in the member countries. It also aims at encouraging and facilitating the establishment of joint maritime companies and shipping lines between OIC Member States, and strives to help formulation of a unified policy for maritime transporters of the Muslim world. The OISA provides assistance in exchanging technical services and marine maintenance operations among companies of the Member States, to improve the efficiency of their fleets. It also extends assistance to OIC Member States in the areas of marine safety, marine pollution, maritime laws and marine

THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

insurance so as to conform to international laws and regulations. The OISA's headquarters are in Jeddah.

– Organisation of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC)

The OICC was established pursuant to a decision of the Ninth Conference of Foreign Ministers (Dakar, 1978), and its statute was approved by the following year at the Tenth Conference (Fez, 1979). Its headquarters are in Mecca and its General Secretariat is based in Jeddah. The Organisation aims to preserve the identity and heritage of Islamic capitals and cities, enhance sustainable development, and develop comprehensive urban norms, systems and plans for Islamic capitals and cities in order to upgrade their cultural, environmental, urban, economic and social conditions.

– Islamic Committee for the International Crescent (ICIC)

The Islamic Committee for the International Crescent aims to alleviate sufferings caused by natural disasters and war. It was established pursuant to a decision of the Eighth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in 1977 in Tripoli, capital of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Its headquarters are at Benghazi in Libya.

– The Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC)

In accordance with the decision of the Thirty-first session of the ICFM held in June 2004 in Istanbul, the ICYF-DC was established at its Founding General Assembly held in Baku in December 2004. It was granted the status of institution affiliated to the OIC by decision of the Thirty-second ICFM (Sana'a, 2005). The ICYF-DC aims to coordinate youth activities in the OIC countries for the following objectives: advocacy of youth interests, supporting sustainable development, promoting formal and non-formal education, strengthening moral values of young generations and engaging in dialogue among cultures. The Forum consists of thirty-five national and six international youth organisations.

REFORM HISTORY

Since its inception, the OIC has sometimes been blamed for weakness. It was criticised for failure to convey a clear institutional image or to assert authority in international affairs. Dissatisfaction and discontent at its performance have been expressed by the public opinion of the Member States, and sometimes by the representatives of Member States themselves. At the same time, successive Secretaries General of the OIC have complained that the OIC's positive efforts, and sometimes successful accomplishments, have gone unnoticed while failures were always highlighted.

This is not unique to the OIC which, like other intergovernmental and international organisations, has its own inherent weaknesses. These include, but are not limited to, the conflicting national interests of Member States, institutional and legal handicaps in conducting international relations—due partly to divergences of national systems and practices in those areas—and financial difficulties. What needs attention is the Organisation's ability to overcome impediments.

The OIC, today, is composed of fifty-seven Member States and represents a huge ethnic, cultural and economic diversity. This miscellany is coupled with differences in political and ideological orientations, thus representing different, and sometimes competing, if not conflicting expectations based on diverse national interests and priorities. Naturally, in such conditions, achieving all goals of this or any other organisation is likely to be hampered.

The original Charter of the OIC, which was drafted in the early 1970s, was partly responsible for some of the subsequent shortcom-

ings. The Charter was not drafted until year three of the OIC's existence. Owing to the vague drafting of some of its most significant articles, the Charter did not have a clear-cut definition of the responsibilities placed on Member States and the OIC agencies in attaining the Organisation's objectives. The formulation of the Charter was handicapped by its short-term priorities. Drafted at a time when it was also charged with establishment of the OIC's modalities and functions, the Charter lacked the necessary space and length of experience needed in international matters to provide a coherent and workable vision. Furthermore, another obstacle to formulation of an enduring OIC vision was the different expectations and resources held by Member States. As has been described, each Member State had its own priorities, and each could only commit itself to the goals enshrined in the Charter according to its own ability, resources and national interest.

Institutional weakness was another prime reason for deficient performance. For example, the small bureaucracy of the OIC failed to match the big issues to be tackled by the Organisation or the expectations of its Member States and Muslims around the world. The General Secretariat and most of the OIC organs were understaffed. Moreover, the OIC, for several reasons, has suffered serious problems caused by the inability to recruit well-trained and qualified staff members, due to the absence of a rational recruitment policy based on merit and professionalism. This certainly hampered the foundation of good performance and good practice.

Another facet of the OIC's institutional weaknesses has been its budgetary shortages. The budget of the OIC, when compared with other regional organisations, remained too small until recently. The poor commitment of some Member States to paying their contributions to the OIC budget badly affected the OIC's performance.

Most of these problems had arisen in the first years after the establishment of the General Secretariat. They were recognised by Member States and the word 'reform' entered the OIC lexicon as early as 1982. Several attempts at reform were enacted during the ensuing decades. What follows is a brief account of the most significant attempts.

The Niamey Process

The Thirteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Niamey in 1982, adopted a resolution on 'OIC Reform' which noted

REFORM HISTORY

that although the institutions, organisations and centres established within the framework of the OIC had achieved some progress in the course of their work and in the discharge of their functions, it was nevertheless necessary to ensure a larger degree of coordination that would prevent duplication and thus remove any obstacles likely to hinder their work. This recognition heralded what became to be known as the 'Niamey Process'. The conference, subsequently, authorised the Secretary General to convene a committee of governmental experts to study the working of all the subsidiary organs, institutions and centres established under the auspices of the OIC. The Committee of Experts thus met in Jeddah on 26–28 November 1983 and embarked on a review of the work of all OIC agencies, with a view to suggesting how their work could be coordinated, removing any duplication, and making recommendations for improving their effectiveness. The Fourteenth Foreign Ministers Conference, held in Dhaka, reviewed the Committee's work and requested Member States and the heads of the respective centres to express their views to enable the Committee of Experts to follow up its study of the subject and submit its recommendations to the Fifteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers for final decision. The conference, moreover, decided, in its Resolution 11/14-AF, to defer the establishment of any new centres pending completion of the Committee's work.

Equally significant was the Fifteenth Foreign Ministers Conference, held in Sana'a in 1984, which re-emphasised the need to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the OIC General Secretariat and all its subsidiary institutions. The conference resolution on OIC Reform included important articles that covered almost all areas that needed reform.¹

The Group identified the need to review the priority programmes in all the sectors of the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation Among the Member States (which was adopted by the Third Islamic Summit, Mecca/Taif, 1981) as an integral element of the effective functioning of the Organisation in its efforts to strengthen cooperation. The conference invited the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) established by the Third Summit to formulate priority programmes in all sectors of the 1981 Plan of Action, with a view to assigning appropriate tasks to the General Secretariat and the subsidiary organs, institutions and centres.

The conference, furthermore, decided to recompose the Group of Government Experts established by the Thirteenth Foreign Ministers

Conference so as to include only highly qualified experts nominated by Member States. The Group would consider ways and means to coordinate the work of the OIC General Secretariat and all subsidiary bodies, institutions and centres, assessing as well as reviewing their functions and performance with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency. It further invited the Standing Committees to periodically assess, review and appraise the work and performance of the entire OIC system, with a view to ensuring prompt and effective implementation of the tasks assigned to the different bodies. The conference resolutions also requested the General Secretariat and all subsidiary organs, institutions and centres to extend fullest cooperation and support to the Group.

In addition, on the request of the OIC General Secretariat in pursuance of the aforementioned resolutions of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Foreign Ministers Conferences, the Saudi Institute of Public Administration (SIPA) conducted in 1986 a study on coordination within the framework of the OIC. The findings of the study showed that there was poor coordination among almost all OIC organs. Causes of this poor coordination, according to the SIPA study, were:²

- The absence of a well-defined expansion plan led, in some cases, to overlooking priority objectives in favour of concentration upon secondary ones. It led also to duplication in functions and responsibilities. Consequently, the financial burden grew heavier and made it extremely difficult for the OIC to follow up the implementation of previous projects effectively.
- The lack of continuous evaluation worsened the problem. Coordination could have been easily pursued if the consistency of OIC activities and programmes was continuously evaluated against the various phases and general policies of the plan.
- The overlapping objectives and functions in the statutes of the various OIC agencies affected the OIC's ability to attain its goals. The assignment of similar objectives led to duplication of effort and to an increase in the financial burden of the OIC without an equivalent increase in the productivity of the Organisation. What made this problem more serious was that duplication in responsibilities of different OIC organs was sanctioned in the ratified statutes and legal documents of these organs.

The study, furthermore, pointed to internal organisational obstacles such as the unavailability of an uninterrupted flow of information, lim-

REFORM HISTORY

ited or unclear lines of responsibilities, and shortage of manpower. It also found that the financial autonomy of the OIC organs, many of which received funding directly from the Member States, led also to weak coordination. Once budgets are approved by OIC Foreign Ministers the General Secretariat's financial role and oversight comes to an end; each organ deals with its own financial affairs.

After it had identified the causes of poor coordination, the SIPA study put forward interesting recommendations for enhancing the performance of OIC institutions. These included the need to consider the principal objectives of the OIC as the fundamental criteria for establishing (or disestablishing) agencies and institutions, and to end duplication and rationalize expenditure. Many detailed proposals were suggested in the fields of restructuring, management and financial control.

Meanwhile, a case had arisen in the mid-1980s which also necessitated a confirmation and consolidation of the statuses and competences of the OIC institutions. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) resolved to amend its own statute. It proposed a package of amendments including, among others, an expansion of its own authority.

ISESCO was initially established to function 'under the supervision of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference'³ and under the conditions stipulated in Article 5(a) of its original charter:

to work towards complementing and supplementing the work of the specialised institutions of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in the fields of education, science and culture, on the one hand, and of Member States, on the other, so as to enhance Islamic solidarity, provided that the specialised institutions operating within the framework of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in the fields of education, science and culture, such as the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development, the World Centre for Islamic Education, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture as well as the International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage, retain their independence in working within their fields of competence. The prerogatives of the Islamic Organisation—ISFSCO—and those of the above institutions should neither overlap nor be incompatible. The bodies and departments which may be established later should not duplicate the work of the above-mentioned institutions. The Islamic Organisation—ISESCO—shall carry out all activities not falling within the competence of these institutions.

However in 1988, the Third General Conference of ISESCO made a move by its own initiative and adopted a decision '... to integrate the

educational, scientific and cultural institutions and centres of OIC into ISESCO or, if necessary, abolish them.⁴

This case, together with other debates generated throughout the Niamey Process, was to be finalised by the Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, in Riyadh in 1989.

The Riyadh Resolution

A substantial consolidation was made possible in 1989 by the organisational resolutions and especially Resolution 6/18-AF of the Eighteenth Foreign Ministers Conference, held in Riyadh. This conference constituted a major milestone in the OIC's structuring process as it laid down several structural reforms that regulated the relationship between the different OIC organs and, at the same time, settled the debates relating to the respective prerogatives of the OIC's various organs.

An outline now follows of the sections of Resolution 6/18-AF entitled 'On the Functioning of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and its Subsidiary Organs, Specialised and Affiliated Institutions' where the resolution refers to restructuring and consolidation.

Strategy of Joint Islamic Action

The conference entrusted the Secretary General with the task of conceiving and formulating a comprehensive strategy for joint Islamic action on the basis of the Mecca/Taif Declaration and the Economic Plan of Action. Such a conception would include a proposal to prioritise programmes in all sectors of joint Islamic action, together with a proposal for the appropriate tasks to be carried out in this context by the General Secretariat and OIC subsidiary organs and affiliated institutions.

Structural Reforms

The conference, moreover, decided that the General Secretariat and OIC subsidiary organs and affiliated institutions should find active ways to rationalise their activities. The following classification of OIC subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions was adopted:

a) **Subsidiary organs:** These are established within the framework of the OIC in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Islamic Summit or the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. Member States

REFORM HISTORY

shall automatically become members of these organs and their budgets shall be approved by the latter forum.

b) Specialised institutions: These are established within the framework of the OIC in accordance with a resolution of the Islamic Summit or the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. Membership of these organs shall be optional and open to OIC Member States. Their budgets are independent from the budget of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs and are approved by their respective legislative bodies as stipulated in their respective statutes.

c) Affiliated institutions: Membership of these institutions is optional and open to institutions and organs of OIC Member States. Their budgets are independent of the budget of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary and specialised organs. They are established under the auspices of the Islamic Summit or the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. Affiliated institutions may be granted observer status by a resolution of the Foreign Ministers Conference. They may obtain voluntary assistance from the subsidiary and specialised organs as well as from Member States.

In addition to calling for rationalisation, the conference also set guidelines to enable internal restructuring of the General Secretariat and the subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions. This would include the establishment of principles that would govern the interaction between them and establish lines of responsibility. Crucially, the conference ordered a moratorium on the establishment of additional OIC organs.

Regarding the restructuring of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs and coordination between them and the specialised and affiliated institutions, the resolution stated that:

- Priority shall be given to strengthening and invigorating the subsidiary as well as specialised and affiliated institutions already functioning. Priority was given to the implementation of Resolution No. 11/14-AF, adopted by the Fourteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which stipulated that no new organ should be set up and decided to postpone the establishment of organs already approved but not yet functional that required financing from the OIC, or whose activities duplicated the functions of any existing organ.

- The OIC shall retain the subsidiary organs referred to earlier.
- The Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs, in addition to the functions constitutionally stipulated, shall assume the functions of a Joint General Assembly for all subsidiary organs. It shall be responsible for examining the economic, cultural and social programmes of activities pertaining to the General Secretariat and subsidiary organs, and submit its recommendations to the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.
- Several organs shall retain their existing status: the Islamic Fiqh Academy, the International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural Heritage (ICPICH), the Al-Quds Fund and its Waqf, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), the Islamic Committee for International Crescent.

Furthermore, the conference requested the Secretary General to take the necessary measures to ensure that each internal set-up performed its duties in accordance with the internal rules of the OIC General Secretariat, and to adopt scientific and practical policies for the appointment of staff with a view to minimising operational expenditure and in keeping with the status of the OIC as an international organisation.

Coordinating Organs

Still on the issue of coordination, the conference asked the General Secretariat to establish a body to follow up and coordinate activities between the General Secretariat and the OIC system, provided that the establishment of such a body did not entail new financial commitments. It also requested the Secretary General to convene an annual meeting for consultation and coordination between the activities of the General Secretariat and those of the OIC system, with heads and directors of these institutions attending that meeting, and the Secretary General presiding.

The Eminent Persons Group

The process that was launched in Niamey in 1982 and finalised in Riyadh in 1989 met one essential aspect of the need for reform, the structural aspect, but other questions remained. The Seventh Islamic Summit, held in Casablanca in December 1994, recognised that the

REFORM HISTORY

profound changes taking place in the world, such as economic globalisation and the formation of regional economic groupings, posed serious challenges to the Muslim world. It also discussed views expressed about the image of Islam outside the Muslim world, and the important role of the OIC in stimulating cooperation among the Member States to meet these challenges.

After reviewing the Organisation's past achievements and its existing capabilities to meet the challenges in order to enhance its relevance and effectiveness, the Seventh Summit decided to launch a new reform process. Therefore, it decided:

to establish immediately an Eminent Persons Group comprising a number of outstanding individuals from various disciplines drawn from Member States to take stock of the achievement of the Organisation over the past twenty-five years, identify its strength and weaknesses, review its objectives in the light of changing circumstances and submit to the Twenty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Conakry, 1995) recommendations on appropriate measures that should be taken to enhance its effectiveness and relevance as the promoter of Islamic solidarity and cooperation and an overall perspective plan to expand and strengthen development cooperation among member countries for the progress of the *Ummah*.⁵

It was decided that the Secretary General should appoint the Eminent Persons Group in consultation with the Summit Chairman and the Member States, taking equitable geographical distribution into account. The General Secretariat and all bodies under the OIC system were invited to extend their full cooperation to the Eminent Persons Group to enable it to carry out its function effectively.

Accordingly, the Eminent Persons Group held its kick-off meeting in Jeddah in June 1995 and decided to set up three sub-committees: a Committee for Political and Institutional Affairs; a Committee for Economic, Social and Science and Technology Affairs; and a Committee for Cultural and Information Affairs. The sub-committees met and submitted their preliminary reports, which included an initial assessment of areas to be examined.

The report of the Political and Institutional Affairs Committee was noteworthy as it touched upon, some important areas. On *Islamic solidarity*, it agreed that there was an urgent need to update that concept and imbue it with greater dynamism. In view of the socio-economic and international security changes after the Cold War, and the fact that the challenges confronting the Islamic world were different in

nature from those experienced during the age of decolonisation and development, the need for collective Islamic action was apparent more than ever before. This broad and all-encompassing concept, it was agreed, should also be deepened in scope, and modalities should be identified for translating it into an effective approach covering all areas of common endeavour of OIC Member States.

On the questions of peace and security, it was felt, according to the report of the Political and Institutional Committee, that the OIC generally appeared unable to play a decisive role in such issues as Jerusalem, Palestine, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia. The report, further, expressed the Committee's belief that the concept of collective Islamic security needed to be developed and reconciled with other concepts of collective security of Member States; the OIC should be empowered to play an effective role in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, and additional mechanisms for peace and security should be established within the OIC.

The Sub-Committee for Political and Institutional Affairs agreed that the Charter of the OIC remained valid and required no revision. However, it was pointed out that new modalities should be identified for realising the objectives and purposes of the Charter, by determining new orientations and priorities of work for the OIC in light of the global changes in the political, security and economic environment. Renaming the OIC was briefly touched upon, but the Sub-Committee decided not to make any suggestions on this. The report emphasised the need for closer cooperation and coordination between the OIC and other multilateral bodies.

The report also highlighted the need for providing the OIC with adequate financial resources. In addition, the report of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Science and Technology Cooperation reviewed the areas of cooperation being addressed by the OIC. It also touched upon the need to look at the decision-making process in the Organisation. It strongly urged examination of the need to improve financial resources, inject competition, strengthen institutional capacity and promote the operational standards of the subsidiary organs. It reflected the Committee's intention to study the factors of success, and the reasons for failure to properly carry out responsibilities—identifying several possible factors such as resource constraints, poor management and manpower resources, an over-ambitious fluffy mandate, and complicated decision-making processes.

REFORM HISTORY

Three months after its initial meeting, the Eminent Persons Group met in September 1995 and issued its final report. The report was too generic in its findings, and in some parts it did not reflect all the preliminary assessments expressed in the initial reports of the Committees. The report maintained that the OIC 'scored numerous achievements and gains in the political, economic and cultural fields.'⁶ It also said that the OIC played active and positive roles on issues such as Palestine, Afghanistan, and Muslim minorities. In the economic field, it mentioned numerous OIC achievements such as the establishment of institutions and organs to implement the projects and agreements concluded, and achievements in the domains of culture and information. Without providing further explanation, the report considered that the main strong points characterising the OIC and its activities lay in the existence of the Standing Committees and its success in establishing effective mechanisms such as Contact Groups and Ad-Hoc Ministerial Committees on various Islamic causes.

As for the weaknesses, the report emphasised that the OIC's main shortcomings lay in the financial problems afflicting the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs. Without going into details, it proposed considering the merging of some of the OIC organs so as to boost efficiency. It also proposed adoption of the Committee on Economic Affairs' recommendation that the concerned departments of the OIC General Secretariat should assume the activities and tasks of the Islamic Foundation for Science and Technology and Development (IFS-TAD), as this institution had proved incapable of overcoming its difficult problems. The report, likewise, proposed that the tasks of the Islamic Centre for Trade and Development in Casablanca might be shared between the General Secretariat, the IDB and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group were no less general than these broad findings it had reached. It advised that in the light of the new challenges facing the Islamic *Ummah*, 'it is necessary to define and deepen the comprehensive concept of Islamic solidarity, in particular at the regional level.'⁷ Without defining them, the Group recommended the establishment of additional mechanisms to develop the OIC's role regarding issues of peace and security. It also advocated enhancing the role and powers of the OIC Secretary General to enable him to develop urgent procedures to mediate and settle disputes when crises erupt. There was also a recommendation for opening OIC

regional offices and establishing a Permanent Contact Mechanism at the General Secretariat to collect necessary information for developing relations and strengthen contacts with the Member States.

On the cultural and economic levels, the Group noted that the failure to implement many OIC resolutions and recommendations was attributable to the imbalance between the ambitious projects adopted and the scant resources provided for project execution. Consequently, it said, a spirit of realism should be maintained when formulating new plans.

The report recommended boosting cooperation with the private sector in Member States. It also encouraged empowerment of the cultural and information sectors so as to keep abreast of new developments in the international arena, and draw up an integrated plan for creating the required links between the different parts of the Islamic world and promote the concept of Islamic solidarity.

The Intergovernmental Group of Experts

The reform process took another step forward at the Eighth Islamic Summit, held in Tehran in 1997. After reviewing the report of the OIC Secretary General on the Administrative Reform and Financial Redress of the General Secretariat, the Summit emphasised the need to activate and enhance the OIC's role at the Islamic and international levels so as to serve the objectives for which the Organisation was established. The Summit, accordingly, decided to set up an open-ended intergovernmental committee of experts and commissioned it to examine the report of the Secretary General and adopt recommendations on every proposal it contained, and refer them to the Twenty-fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Doha, 1998) to take the appropriate decisions therein.⁸

This open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts held a number of meetings.⁹ In accordance with the Summit resolution referred to earlier, the Group held its first meeting in Jeddah in February 1998, where it agreed that the fundamental problem which needed priority consideration was the virtually crippling financial crisis of the OIC. The Group, further, expressed its belief that the restructuring of the Organisation should be carried out within the framework of the structures already in place and according to the principles of adherence to the OIC Charter and other rules and regulations in force; no establish-

REFORM HISTORY

ment of new organs; flexibility in implementing administrative reform and financial recovery; and ensuring that reform and restructuring were comprehensive and complete. (Some of these principles may have limited the work of the Group; considering the Charter untouchable and insisting that the work had to be conducted within the framework of the existing OIC structures meant that the Group had its hands tied and chances for successful and genuine reform were limited.)

The Group also emphasised that the Secretary General should be empowered to carry out such administrative and financial reforms as might come within his purview, and within the limits of power granted to him by the Charter and in accordance with existing regulations. On employment policies, the Group placed emphasis placed on higher qualifications, specialisation and experience.

The Accenture attempt¹⁰

The Ninth Islamic Summit, held in Doha in December 2000, commissioned the OIC General Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Twenty-seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers—the Government of Malaysia—and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), to select a management consultancy firm to be entrusted with the task of revamping the existing apparatus of the OIC in order to make it efficient.¹¹ The Malaysian Accenture Consultancy Company was chosen to carry out the study, and the IDB accepted responsibility for its expenses. An open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts held a meeting in Jeddah in December 2002 to consider the terms of reference for the study. These terms of reference included:

- To upgrade and modernise the working methodology so as to achieve flexibility, increase efficiency, and enhance performance;
- To avoid decisions that would burden the Member States with additional expenditure charged on the budget of the General Secretariat;
- To make maximum use of the existing centres and organs without creating new ones;
- To avoid decisions involving amendment of the OIC Charter;
- To activate the OIC Summit Bureau and consider convening an annual follow-up meetings when necessary;
- To consider convening biannual meetings for the Ministerial Conference;

- To consider convening regular meetings of the Permanent Representatives to the OIC to consider ordinary or emergency matters;
- To focus on resolving the OIC's financial problems.

Accordingly, Accenture started its review exercise in July 2003, concluding in August 2005 with a general report addressing several aspects of the OIC structure, activities and programmes and offering a set of recommendations. The General Secretariat examined the report and found it to be a valuable building block for a new, future-oriented organisation. Nevertheless, several comments were recorded by the General Secretariat as well as by the Member States. The following are just a few examples of these comments:¹²

- Although the General Secretariat's physical structure and internal proceedings were well researched by Accenture, the report sounded in certain places like a mere financial control exercise;
- The report did not propose specific innovative structures to meet the new challenges of the twenty-first century. Accenture probably felt restricted in its actions by its terms of reference which stipulated that the restructuring exercise should not lead to amendments in the Charter or to any new financial commitments for the Member States;
- The study would have benefited from a more expansive scope that would involve a closer review of new challenges and comparison with similar international organisations and use them as a point of reference for a fresh look at the existing structures;
- The report should have suggested a mechanism concerning the role of the General Secretariat and the different OIC Standing Committees
- Some Member States suggested that the study should have touched on such issues as changing the name of the OIC to reflect its international multidisciplinary character, and the need to amend the Charter to reflect the OIC's twenty-first century vision.

Despite the positive sides of the Accenture study, it was difficult to implement its recommendations for several reasons, as indicated by these comments and the reservations expressed by the General Secretariat and the Member States. In fact, by the time the report was delivered in August 2005, the General Secretariat had already embarked on a new process that addressed root-and-branch reform needs and the basic issues relating to the structural apparatus for the

REFORM HISTORY

functioning of the OIC, together with the issues formulated before, all of which were geared towards radically improving the efficiency of the Organisation.

Was the OIC immune to reform?

Sadly enough, the end results of these reform initiatives were close to nil. Not only did these efforts fail to create a genuine improvement in the performance of the OIC, but they also exposed, once again, the quandary that the Organisation was facing. Ironically, the failure to implement the OIC resolutions, which was one of the key reasons for the pursuit of reform, stood anew as a key factor in hampering all reform efforts. This sad situation posed serious questions to the OIC leadership: was the OIC incapable of being reformed? What are the reasons that caused this resistance to reform?

It is my humble opinion that any reform should start by reviewing, comprehensively, from within, the root causes of the problem and identifying its reasons before embarking on changing the existing structures. The number and extent of challenges facing the Muslim world require formulating a new conception of joint Islamic action. This, in turn, requires conducting an analytical revision not only of the physical structure of the OIC, but also of its Charter, goals and objectives.

As an OIC official having experienced these difficulties for almost thirty years, my belief was that a complete redrafting of the Charter had become an imperative task that we should dare to embark on in order to succeed. This would also require reconsidering the aims and objectives and other provisions contained in the Charter, to be able to better confront the current challenges. Upon assuming the post of Secretary General of the OIC, I was honoured to be given the chance of tackling this issue, and I recount my experience and the steps taken to get to that point in the following chapter.

As for the physical structure of the OIC, there was a need to examine the accumulated problems, including the lack of competent staff capable of performing the needed services and contributing initiatives to promote joint Islamic action. The past recruitment method—which sometimes involved patronage and nepotism and disregarded competence—led to an intolerable situation with staff unable to perform the necessary tasks. Any serious reform action, therefore, had to pay attention to recruitment policy.

By the same token, the budget deficit should be one of the areas to be considered properly by any reform endeavour. When compared with other regional organisations, the size of the budget of the OIC was too small and could not be enough to empower the OIC to shoulder its responsibilities and meet the expectations of the Member States.

Likewise, a serious reform process should tackle the problem of failure to implement OIC resolutions. The process of drafting and adopting resolutions at OIC policy-making bodies needed to be revised. Passing resolutions by consensus made the resolution-making process cumbersome and lacking in credibility. Resolutions were not taken seriously and their adoption was sometimes done out of courtesy. Therefore, their effect did not leave the conference halls in which they were adopted.

For these reasons, a new reform scheme had to be introduced that should take into account the obstacles emanating from the Charter and, therefore, be comprehensively ground-breaking in dealing with weaknesses and problems. Hence a new reform process was introduced; this will be explored in the following chapters.

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

The Muslim world was once a thriving sphere that produced a glorious civilisation and was marked by outstanding intellectual achievements. Although the Muslim world today lacks neither human capital nor rich natural resources, certain viewpoints—perhaps justifiably—consider it a world lagging behind, plagued by disunity and underdevelopment. In the post-9/11 world, it had the additional and haunting burden of being a victim of a vicious and adverse campaign of Islamophobia. Despite all these negative shortcomings, the Muslim world still aspires to regain its long-lost status and strives to be a part of the mainstream global community, tackling contemporary concerns and working towards development in all fields. Moreover, it yearns to benefit from the universal values of freedom, liberty, good governance, justice and human rights, and hopes to rejoice in the blessing of progress and prosperity.

This desire embraces those who govern and the governed, with Muslim world leaders expressing the wish to act positively to deal with the adversity before them. They have had to acknowledge their flaws and weaknesses in domestic, political, and social aspects and address the need to embark upon sustainable economic development.

Past and present experience has taught Muslims that the lack of international solidarity is highly detrimental to their political and economic well-being. There was also a consensual view that to bring about the needed transformation, it was imperative that change should begin at home. This meant improving existing institutions of interna-

tional cooperation and action. The OIC represented a promise that was not yet realised, and Member States were thus aware of the acute need to reform the OIC and its institutions. To that end, it was apparent that the most effective remedy was to turn the OIC into a credible organisation, capable of catering to the needs of the Muslim world and empowered to face the challenges of this new era.

As explained in preceding chapters, this imperative was recognised throughout the OIC's history, but it achieved a new impetus at the Tenth Islamic Summit held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in October 2003. Credit for this goes to the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamed, who, in his inaugural speech at that Summit, forcefully called for a reform of the OIC as a first step in addressing the dismal situation of the Muslim world.

Accordingly the Summit adopted a historic resolution to establish a Commission of Eminent Persons to formulate a strategy and a plan of action that would enable the Islamic *Ummah* to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Commission was given a broad mandate, and wider parameters to suggest root-and-branch change. It was also charged with the preparation of a comprehensive plan designed to promote policies and programmes to foster moderation, in true consonance with the injunctions of Islam and its principles of tolerance, emancipation and the exaltation of humanity and mankind. A third duty of the Commission was to prepare recommendations for the reform and restructuring of the OIC system. It was also tasked to tackle the question of voluntary financing of the Organisation's activities and programmes.

However, it was not until 2005 that change began to manifest itself in earnest. As we shall see, successive soul-searching meetings and conferences during 2005 explored the very *raison d'être* of the Organisation. They demonstrated the fallacy of the assumption that the OIC cannot be reformed and proved that embarking on such an endeavour is possible, timely and necessary. They were encouraged by the coming of a fresh OIC leadership with the first-ever democratically elected Secretary General, who went on to convene a series of meetings on OIC reform conducted by a group of eminent persons and intergovernmental groups. These discussions proved to be instrumental in setting the wheels of reform running. Added impetus was supplied that year by the Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz (the then Crown Prince) who called for reform and the strengthening of joint Islamic action, the

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

convening of the Mecca Forum of Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals, and the holding of the OIC's Third Extraordinary Summit.

A new, democratically elected OIC leadership

For more than three decades, the OIC observed the tradition of choosing its chief executives by consensus at the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM). However, at the Thirty-first Meeting, held in June 2004 in Istanbul, the OIC Member States voted for the first democratically elected OIC Secretary General. Electing a new Secretary General in this manner represented a turning point in the history of the OIC. It ushered in an irreversible new work philosophy that favoured reforms, efficiency and result-oriented endeavours.

As the newly elected OIC Secretary General, I assumed my duties on 1 January 2005. I brought with me twenty-five years of experience as the Director General of one of the most prominent OIC subsidiary organs, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA). I was honoured and humbled to be thus supported by strong backing from the Member States. In my inaugural statement¹ on 28 December 2004, I tried to identify the areas that needed focus, sought to indicate the weaknesses of the OIC, and set out my vision for the future of the Organisation.

I was of the opinion that the OIC had, so far, failed to fully achieve its potential and establish itself as a powerful entity capable of actively voicing the concerns of its Member States and making itself heard in the international arena. I asserted that the OIC's status did not reflect the real strength of the Muslim world in view of the wide geographical breadth of land it covers, its abundant manpower, rich and varied natural resources, untapped potential and enormous capacities.

Given the large membership of the OIC and the various differences amongst its members, it was not easy to reach consensus on each and every matter. Nonetheless, sensing the deep sense of intrinsic Islamic solidarity that existed amongst Member States and their populations, I believed that it was still possible to reach common ground on many top political issues and problems of common concern, such as education, development, and the eradication of poverty, as well as important Islamic causes like the question of Palestine.

On this basis, I insisted that the OIC should be cognisant of its own potential and capacities and take the necessary steps to mobilise them

in order to enhance its status, increase its efficiency and intensify its activities. I recommended the adoption of clearer, rationalised and implementable resolutions, formulated in an optimal and result-oriented manner, in a bid to enhance the credibility and the impact of the OIC within and outside the Muslim world. To achieve this goal and to effectively address the major concerns of the *Ummah*, genuine political will is required, coupled with concerted cooperation on the part of Member States and immediate reform of the OIC and its institutions and agencies.

As Secretary General, I declared at the outset that the problem of international terrorism needed to receive urgent and adequate attention, adding that it was incumbent upon the OIC to work persistently to make the world understand that terrorism has no religious or cultural origin; that it is a threat to all nations, including the Muslim world.

My view is that a well-defined strategy is needed to project an authentic image of Islam and counter 'Islamophobia', and that for that purpose, better and wider use should be made of the mass media and information technologies. To that end, I insisted that it was vitally important for the OIC to devote special care to reinforcing dialogue among Muslims, on the one hand, and on the other, to fostering interaction between them and the outside world, with international and regional organisations, particularly in the Western world, and with other major powers.

I advocated a genuine and comprehensive revision of the OIC Charter which had been adopted in 1972 and conceived to cater to a smaller organisation designed to organise meetings. This vision was no longer suitable to cope with the multifarious needs of the Muslim world in the face of the challenges of the contemporary world.

Reform of the General Secretariat

The need to reform the General Secretariat was also crucial. This was a consistent theme throughout its history. Various problems hindering its work were highlighted, such as the lack of qualified human resources and the meagre financial means. In the past, recruitment for posts in the General Secretariat was undertaken on the basis of patronage and nepotism without regard for qualifications. There was an urgent need for revision of the recruitment policy and hiring of experienced staff members. Budget inadequacy, due to non-payment of

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

mandatory contributions by some Member States, was a chronic problem for the Organisation.

This need was quickly identified by the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons when it first met in 2005. As will be described later, the group took the remarkable step of supporting my call for embarking on a comprehensive reform of the OIC system, including the amendment of the Charter.

Another very important aspect of the malfunctioning of the Organisation was the non-implementation of OIC resolutions. The drafting of resolutions and recommendations was done sometimes in a careless manner and often left to the General Secretariat. It was proposed that in order to gain credibility, the decision-making process based on the principle of consensus had to be replaced by taking of votes.

Given these comprehensive reviews of the issues raised in my inaugural speech, the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons decided to adopt this statement as an official document of their meeting.

OIC Commission of Eminent Persons (CEP)

In pursuance of a resolution adopted by the Tenth Islamic Summit in 2003, and reiterated during the Thirty-first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul in 2004, a meeting of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons was held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 27–29 January 2005. Its aim was to discuss ways and propose strategies that could enable the Islamic *Ummah* to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

At its first meeting, the Commission identified the challenges facing the *Ummah*: challenges that encompass many political, economic and social factors, as well as organisational flaws, issues of security, corruption, poor governance and misrepresentation by the media. A follow-up meeting was held in Islamabad on 28–29 May 2005 to suggest recommendations for dealing with the challenges that had been identified. Three sets of documents were prepared. Each addressed core and subsidiary issues facing the Muslim world.

1. Challenges facing the Muslim world in the twenty-first century

In the first report, many recommendations were proposed by the Commission, covering a variety of political, economic, and social issues, including increased democratisation, respect for human rights, good

governance, and combating corruption. The need for OIC Member States to take a more active international role was also highlighted, as well as the promotion and development of sustainable development policies, the means of dealing with globalisation and poverty. Moreover, recommendations were made for increasing cooperation among OIC Member States through trade and transfer of technology. Attention was also drawn to the need to establish a framework for common security and devise various means to project the true image of Islam on the international scene.

2. Policies and programmes for promoting enlightened moderation

In the second report, two key elements to promote moderation were identified. First, there was a need for reforms in education in order to eradicate extremism, radicalism and sectarian violence in Muslim states. The Commission proposed moderation in religious life and emphasised the promotion of good governance, the rule of law, equality before the law, political participation, democratic reforms, respect for the principle of separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, and the supremacy of justice. The Commission also noted the importance of inter-religious and inter-civilisational dialogue between the East and the West. Secondly, it spoke of the responsibility of Western powers in addressing issues that have contributed directly or indirectly to the injustice, oppression, aggression and long-standing disputes involving Muslim people.

The report also emphasised the need to arouse awareness amongst Western leaders and the public about the role and contribution of Islam in the intellectual, moral and material progress of the West. It also stressed the need for reliance on diplomacy and dialogue, and recourse to the international judicial system, avoiding recourse to the use of force and unilateralism in resolving international conflicts.

3. OIC reform and restructuring

The Commission endorsed my proposals on the restructuring of the OIC, its Charter, and the strengthening of the office of the Secretary General, and on the staff of the Organisation, on widening the role of the General Secretariat, on establishing departments for conflict resolution, on the dissemination of moderation, on women's emancipation, and on strengthening the role of NGOs. It also supported my proposal

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

to set up a strategic planning unit and a consortium for higher education. The creation of a ‘think tank’, a strategic unit for the promotion of Islamic thought in response to the intellectual challenges of this century, was also recommended.

To implement the resolutions of the Summit and the Conference of Foreign Ministers and enhance effective coordination among the Member States, I proposed that an executive body comprising the Summit and ministerial Troikas, the host country and the Secretary General should be created. In order to improve the Organisation’s financial situation, the report proposed the suspension of the right to vote, and curtailing of other political and financial privileges, for Member States who default in paying their mandatory financial contributions, and said the budget of the OIC and its subsidiary organs should be increased gradually up to the level of comparable organisations.

These recommendations of the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons were apposite as they came at a time when calls for reform were also emanating from high levels in the Islamic world.

Top-level calls for reform

The sombre situation in the Muslim world inspired the then Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia—now the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia—to appeal to the leaders of the Muslim world to unite, in a speech given on the occasion of Hajj on 21 January 2005. He described the state of affairs in the Islamic world as dismal and called for comprehensive reform at all levels. As part of this endeavour, he suggested seeking help from the Islamic intelligentsia and advocated a meeting of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from all parts of the Islamic world for that purpose. He underscored the pivotal role that the OIC could play in carrying out such a major reform project.

In his speech, the heir to the Saudi Arabian throne invited the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as the President of the Tenth OIC Summit, and the OIC Secretary General to convene an extraordinary OIC Summit in Mecca. This Summit was to be preceded by a meeting of leading intellectuals and scholars of the *Ummah* to examine the overall situation of the Muslim world and explore the most effective solutions and means for action to allow the Muslim world to attain its objectives. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, and I,

sincerely welcomed the call of the Saudi monarch, and we expressed our commitment to provide all possible support for the successful convening of the preparatory meeting of scholars as well as the extraordinary Summit.

Empowered by the call of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, the revision of the OIC system by the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons created a great momentum for change and unleashed a comprehensive reform process.

Mecca meeting of intellectuals and scholars

Although scholarship and intellectual tradition are highly regarded in the Muslim world, the idea of seeking views of the intelligentsia on the future of the *Ummah* at an Islamic intergovernmental level was an unprecedented initiative. It was agreed that the preparatory meeting of Muslim scholars would be held in September 2005 and the extraordinary Summit in December of the same year.

We took up this groundbreaking idea with profound enthusiasm and engaged in elaborate discussions within the OIC on the best ways to ensure success. Constant deliberations were also conducted with officials of the host country, Saudi Arabia. It was decided that the forum of Muslim scholars and intellectuals would examine, in a multidisciplinary context, the situation of the Muslim world, deliberate upon possible solutions and means for unity, and produce not simply a scholarly document but an implementable programme of action. As for the themes to be discussed by the scholars' meeting, they were to be the broad issues representing the political, economic and socio-cultural challenges confronting the Muslim *Ummah*.

In the following months, the General Secretariat took the initiative of inviting eminent, well-qualified and renowned scholars and intellectuals to the meeting. One important consideration in the selection of Muslim scholars was the need to invite them from within and outside the OIC Member States, with a view to obtaining the widest possible perspective on critical issues confronting the Muslim world. Since the meeting was to reflect on broad issues of concern for the Muslim world, experts and practitioners from all backgrounds—political scientists, economists, jurists, religious scholars, and media specialists—were invited. The members of the Commission of Eminent Persons were also included, in order to connect this initiative to their deliberations.

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

The meeting was held in Mecca from 9 to 11 September 2005 and was attended by almost a hundred renowned individuals with established credentials. To facilitate the deliberations there were three panels, each of which worked separately to discuss, identify and formulate proposals. The panels covered political issues and the media, economy, science and technology, and culture, education and Islamic thought. To guide the discussions in a focused manner the scholars were provided with a visionary framework document prepared by the General Secretariat.

- The Political and Media Panel's Recommendations

The panel on politics and media was entrusted with reviewing the position of the Muslim world from a contemporary international perspective. At the outset, the panel determined that Islamic values are totally compatible with contemporary universal values as they are premised on the standards of equality, justice, peace and brotherhood. The scholars acknowledged that the dismal situation prevailing in the Muslim world was due to the prolonged period of crisis it had passed through, compounded by external challenges and the onslaught of negative campaigns. They therefore proposed to set the priorities for the revival of the Muslim world during the next decade.

Among the issues examined by the panel were the effectiveness of Islamic solidarity and joint Islamic action, good governance, conflict prevention and resolution, terrorism, globalisation, and reform and restructuring of the OIC and its institutions. It also examined the perception of Islam and Muslims in the Western media, Islamophobia, the dialogue among civilisations, and the political and human rights of Muslim minorities in non-OIC Member States. The panel emphasised the importance of ensuring an effective role for the Muslim world in the reform of the United Nations and in the expansion of the UN Security Council, so that the Muslim world may get adequate representation in this world forum. The question of Palestine was also given specific attention. On these issues, the panel made various concrete recommendations that required pro-active efforts on the part of the Member States.

- Economy, Science and Technology Panel's Recommendations

In the economic field, noting the many advantages Member States have in terms of their endowment of natural and human resources, the panel

identified a number of challenges that should be addressed and corrected in the short term. Impediments and challenges included state control of economies, lack of a strong private sector, failure to promote and implement sustainable development policies, low levels of investment, insufficient trade financing, a heavy burden of foreign debt and debt servicing, severe balance of payments problems, and problems of market access (tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade). Beside all these impediments, some Member States also suffered from a lack of effective means of transport, infrastructural inadequacies, a lack of capacity, restrictions on access for businesspersons, poverty and disease, a lack of basic needs, and inadequate skilled human resources.

The panel proposed several measures to encourage regional economic groupings among the Member States and exhorted those states to abide by the newly elaborated Framework Agreement on Trade and Preferential System as a first step towards creating a Free Trade Area, which might ultimately lead to economic integration. The panel called for more energetic efforts at trading among OIC countries and an increase in that trade from the current level of 13 per cent to 20 per cent by 2015. It also called for enhancement of the role of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Islamic Development Bank, and favoured the establishment of a relief fund for humanitarian purposes.

In the field of science and technology, the basic challenges were seen as including a lack of national science and technology development strategies, weak university-industry collaboration, shortages in human resources, and insufficient infrastructure for research and development. Some of the targets set by the panel include ensuring that 1440 researchers, engineers and scientists per million of population should be trained by the end of the decade, and achieving the target of helping 30 per cent of Muslim students between the ages of 18 and 24 to have access to university by 2015. Moreover, as will be examined in further detail in Chapter 8, it was decided that twenty universities of the OIC Member States would be promoted so as to be elevated to the rank of the first 500 top universities in the world.

- Islamic Thought, Culture and Education Panel's Recommendations

The scholars were of the view that Islam was founded on the concepts of moderation, peace, compassion, tolerance and peaceful coexistence,

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

and that this fact needed to be projected in the West and the outside world.

With regard to Islamic thought, culture, and education, the panel analysed thirteen critical issues affecting the progress of Muslim societies. It reviewed issues of moderation in Islam, the multiplicity of schools of thought and the Islamic Fiqh Academy, particularly in relation to the issuing of *fatwas* (religious rulings). The panel also looked into illiteracy and higher education, enhanced solidarity through cultural exchange, dialogue among civilisations, the rights of women and the rights of children, issues concerning Muslim youth, and ways of helping the Muslim minorities in non-OIC countries preserve their culture. The scholars also examined the challenges of globalisation and its effects on the cultural heritage of the *Ummah*. The panel noted that it would be possible to achieve progress and bring renaissance to the Muslim world by setting priorities for the medium and the longer terms, and concluded that a periodical review of OIC strategies in all fields was necessary.

The General Secretariat had prepared a draft taking into consideration the views and opinions expressed throughout the various preparatory meetings. This draft was discussed by members of the panel and given a final shape. This exercise was very productive as it brought to the fore the collective wisdom and experience of leading scholars and intellectuals from the Muslim world.

Preparation of the Ten-Year programme of Action

The outcome of the meetings of the Eminent Persons and the Scholars would have been meaningless if we had limited ourselves to presenting only the generalities of the issues identified at those two meetings to the subsequent Extraordinary Summit held later that year in Mecca, in December 2005. I felt that their deliberations required the necessary political will and momentum evinced by the leaders of the Muslim world which must then be enshrined in a particular document, with specific proposals and targets embedded in it.

A Ten-Year Programme of Action was thus drafted, containing distinct proposals and specific recommendations and amendments. This programme was a clear road map that formed the basis of joint Islamic action, defining various priorities and outlining how to achieve them over the next decade. It also sketched a new way to develop the Mus-

lim world and strengthen its global position. The draft was submitted to a senior officials' meeting and to a ministerial meeting before being presented to the Summit for consideration.

The Ten-Year Programme of Action is considered a major scheme for the reform and development of the Muslim world. It reiterates the hopes and desires of OIC Member States, as articulated throughout the Organisation's history, and reframes those desires for feasible and practical action in the twenty-first century.

The Programme of Action stresses the need for fostering solidarity among Member States, to face the daunting challenges of the age, and for the enhancement of joint Islamic action. It incorporated—almost verbatim—the intellectual, political, social and educational priorities identified by the expert panels at the September 2005 Mecca meeting. The OIC, it urged, should not only continue to pursue traditional causes in a modern and focused way, but also address the urgent issues of the age including human rights, good governance, education, Islamophobia, peace and security and conflict prevention. Reflecting the deliberations of the September conference, the Programme also resolved to reform the Islamic Fiqh Academy so that it would be equipped to answer modern challenges with the enlightened and authentic acknowledgement of Islam's diverse jurisprudential traditions. In addition, the Programme called for the emancipation of women and the good upbringing of Muslim children, and the nurturing of the Islamic values within the families of the Muslim world.

As for issues pertaining to socio-economic development, the Programme stresses the importance of strengthening economic cooperation between the Member States, increasing trade among them as a proportion of overall trade, creating an Islamic free-trade zone, and eradicating poverty. It also calls for support for the Islamic Development Bank, and provision for solidarity assistance in the face of national disasters.

The Ten-Year Programme, when distributed to the representatives of the OIC Member States at the senior official and ministerial levels, received overwhelming unanimity on all main issues. And, notably, the programme captured the attention of the international media. It received positive comments from major capitals in the world and was widely termed as the charter that would usher the Muslim world toward progress and prosperity.

Extraordinary Mecca Summit

The Extraordinary Mecca Summit, held on 7–8 December 2005, was attended by the majority of the leaders of the OIC Member States. Amongst the ideas offered by the world leaders at the Summit, the Saudi and Malaysian interventions were the most notable. The Saudi King affirmed his ‘aspiration to the rise of a unified Islamic *Ummah*; a rule that eradicates injustice and oppression; comprehensive Islamic development targeting the removal of destitution and poverty; the spread of reason and moderation that characterise the tolerance of Islam.’ The Prime Minister of Malaysia stressed that:

The Muslim *Ummah* could no longer be in a state of denial and that the causes for the miserable conditions in which it finds itself today must be confronted and addressed in a holistic manner, *inter alia*, through building capacities as well as the projection of the true image of Islam and its civilisational approaches.

In my statement I reviewed the current situation of the OIC and the appropriate place it was aspiring to occupy on the international scene. My review took into account the weighty global developments and restated the need for strategic planning so as to keep abreast of them. We also needed, I said, to enable cohesion of the fabric of Muslim societies and strengthening of their social stability by preserving their identity, civilisation and lofty human values. I emphasised that I had summoned all my efforts and potential to usher the Organisation into a new era that would enable it to cope with political, economic and cultural issues on a daily basis.

During the two-day Summit the leaders of the *Ummah* agreed that the fundamental changes could only be brought by undertaking holistic reforms in the Muslim world and reshaping our thinking and our acts, which should be more visible than our words. The Summit, besides adopting the Ten-Year Programme of Action,² also endorsed the recommendations of the Commission of Eminent Persons.

My strongly held belief has always been that when the OIC enjoys the support of Member States and gets the necessary resources, it can carry out the programme of development and moderation by drawing on the vast intellectual and economic resources of the Muslim world. When moderation and modernisation in thought and action are combined with sustainable development, the Muslim world will once again be a land of prosperity, progress, peace and security. Therefore, the

level of support and confidence that the Summit entrusted in the OIC system provided appropriate conditions for the OIC to accomplish its mission in serving the interests, objectives and programmes of the *Ummah*. Hence the Ten-Year Programme of Action, with the support of the Member States and the availability of resources, provides a genuine opportunity for the *Ummah* to achieve its objectives. Its practical and implementable nature provides evidence that the OIC system is not resistant to reform, but very ready to achieve genuine and successful elevation and a brighter future.

Immediately after the Mecca Conference, a road map for the implementation of the previously drafted Ten-Year Programme of Action was prepared. This was followed by a meeting of all the organs of the OIC, held in Jeddah in March 2006, where it was decided to circulate progress reports on the implementation of the Ten-Year Programme of Action to all OIC meetings Summit and Foreign Ministers meetings.

The Summit took decisions of the utmost importance whose implementation commenced immediately, such as the creation of a Poverty Alleviation Fund and efforts towards enhancing the scientific and technological capacities of the Member States, with the target of earmarking at least 1 per cent of the GDP of states for research and development. The Summit also acknowledged the importance of closer cooperation between the IDB and the OIC Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).

Reform in effect

Based on the recommendations and observations of the brain-storming meeting of Muslim scholars and experts in September 2005, in my capacity as the Secretary General I took the lead to lay down the blueprint of the reform needed, and assumed the responsibilities as defined in the Ten-Year Programme of Action, which stipulates the need to 'empower the Secretary General to discharge his duties and provide him with sufficient flexibility and resources to enable him to carry out the tasks assigned to him.'

The envisaged reforms centred on the following:

- i) reviewing the Charter;
- ii) creating an Executive Committee to act more expeditiously in decision-making in cases of emergency or urgency;

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

- iii) reforming the Islamic Fiqh Academy;
- iv) restructuring the International Islamic News Agency and the Islamic Solidarity Fund;
- v) establishing a Poverty Alleviation Fund;
- vi) making the OIC's political presence better felt on the global scene;
- vii) empowering the OIC to act in disaster management and humanitarian assistance.

As Secretary General, I felt that to carry out all these reforms, the starting point should be the revision of the OIC Charter and the OIC organs and specialised institutions.

Review of the Charter

As described earlier in the book, after it was established in 1969 the OIC remained without a charter for the first three years of its existence. The basic principles and objectives to govern its activity were only first examined in 1970 during the Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Karachi on 26–28 December. It was not until the spring of 1972 that the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Jeddah, managed to adopt the Charter after a long debate.

Over a certain period of time, the Charter served the purpose of sustaining solidarity among Member States and rallying them around the defence of major causes affecting the Muslim world. However, the limited scope of the Organisation's functions left an impression that its performance fell short of the real aspirations of the Muslim world. Hence new institutions began to be formed almost as soon as the OIC was formed; despite the OIC being viewed as largely ineffective. As we have outlined, with changes in the global political and economic system, the question of reforming the OIC surged to the top of the agenda, and there was a call for a 'review of the Charter and all the activities of the Organisation'.

The post-2005 road map for reform was based on the OIC's Ten-Year Programme of Action. It was considered that the Charter review process would be meaningful only if the fundamental pillars of the new Charter were duly identified, examined and thoroughly discussed. With an eye to the need for new outlooks and concepts, a High Level Advisory Panel (HLAP) was carefully selected under my coordination in

consultation with the Member States. The panel was composed of highly qualified and experienced personalities, with long experience in the realm of international affairs or in the OIC itself. Eminent panelists included: Suleyman Demirel, former President of Turkey, Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamed, former Prime Minister of Malaysia; the late Ali Alatas, former Foreign Minister of Indonesia; Hamid Algabid, former Secretary General of the OIC; Jamil Al-Hujaylan, former Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council; Amadou Moctar M'Bow, former Director General of UNESCO; Dr Nabil Al-Araby, a former Judge at the International Court of Justice; and Lakhdar Brahimi, former UN Undersecretary General (who joined the panel in the concluding session). The panel met twice, in Istanbul in May 2006 and in Jeddah in December 2006.

- Preparation of the Drafts for Consideration by the
Advisory Panel

To facilitate the discussions, the OIC General Secretariat assumed the responsibility of preparing a concept paper and draft proposals for consideration by the HLAP prior to its two meetings. For this purpose, numerous internal meetings at the level of the General Secretariat were convened. Crucially, the paper was presented with charters of several intergovernmental organisations, including the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States, appended.

During the panel's two sessions, I explained in detail and reiterated my views on the charter that I had expressed in earlier meetings and in documents submitted. The panel's subsequent deliberations during the first session provide a fascinating insight into both diverging and converging viewpoints on the OIC that existed in the Muslim world today. Moreover, the pioneering ideas on offer were evidence of the long years of experience and wisdom that each participant brought to the table.

President Demirel was of the opinion that that reform of the OIC had become a necessity in the face of complicated socio-economic problems and the daunting challenges of modern times, and that the Organisation needed restructuring. He also underlined the need to instill genuine and effective solidarity and cooperation among Member States. He recommended that the new Charter be endowed with a set of values rooted in international law and the aim of promoting principles enshrined in the UN Charter, such as the rule of law, human

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

rights, democracy, and peace and harmony, as well as Islamic values. He also advocated the establishment of links for cooperation between regional and international organisations, action to counter extremism, terrorism, Islamophobia and foreign occupation, encouragement of economic and trade relations and sharing of technological information on a voluntary basis among Member States, and eradication of poverty and hunger in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Ethical and social values needed to be promoted and adhered to, and action was needed to preserve the common heritage and the noble spiritual, ethical and social values, he said. He supported the idea of empowering women and youth cultural exchanges among the Member States. Stressing that Muslim minorities and communities in the non-Muslim states should be enabled to preserve their identity, Demirel also called for greater dialogue with other civilisations and underlined the need to teach universal culture in schools.

Dr Hamid Algabid advocated changing the name of the Organisation to 'Muslim World Organisation' or to 'Organisation of Muslim States'. He stressed the importance of incorporating in the Charter the aim of combating religious intolerance and terrorism. In addition, he proposed that Muslim scholars and intellectuals should meet every five years to renew the vision of the OIC. He urged the establishment of a conflict resolution mechanism, somewhat like the African Union's Peace and Security Council, and an enhanced role for the International Islamic Fiqh Academy. On the financing of the specialised committees COMCEC, COMIAC and COMSTECH, Dr Algabid strongly supported the idea that they should be financed by all Member States, rather than being burdens only to the states hosting them. He advocated the creation of stable and durable sources of financing for the Organisation, in the form of an endowment of US\$ 100 million; and proposed that Islamic Solidarity Fund resources be increased to combat poverty and respond to natural disasters.

Ali Alatas, whose memory we will always cherish in gratitude and respect, was of the view that the new charter should elucidate the position on the question of voting on certain issues and the use of the principles of 'qualified majority' and 'simple majority'. He proposed close monitoring of the commitments of the Member States regarding their statutory or budgetary obligations, linked with the use of sanctions. He also endorsed the idea of other members of the panel to increase the financial resources of the General Secretariat, and proposed that

voluntary contributions should be explored. He favoured abolishing the institutions that had lost efficacy, and changing the name of the Organisation.

Dr Nabil Al-Araby suggested that the UN Charter be taken as model for the new charter. He suggested that distinctions should be made between regional and international organisations in general and the specific features of the OIC. He also called for clarifying the misperception that existed as to the OIC's limited relation with religion. He believed the decision-making process should not be based on unanimity or consensus, and proposed streamlining the work at the OIC General Secretariat to make it possible for the Organisation to carry out its mandate effectively. Al-Araby advocated including the notion of good governance and democracy in the principles and objectives of the new charter, as the shortcomings in those fields contributed to the distorted image of Islam. Lastly, he expressed concern over the backwardness of Muslim countries in the fields of science and technology.

Jamil Al-Hujaylan expressed his belief that the charter could reshape the destiny of the Organisation if there were a strong political will from the Member States. He thought that there were always difficulties in implementing the resolutions adopted by OIC conferences, a fact that tarnished the image of the Organisation.

Amadou Moctar M'Bow suggested inclusion in the preamble of references to preservation of peace and security, conflict resolution, the elimination of threats to peace, and preventive diplomacy. He said the Charter needed to have provisions for thematic or sectoral high-level meetings of ministers. He suggested reinforcing the powers of the Secretary General, who should be responsible for preparing the work programme, and proposed that the programmes of all the organs be prepared biannually, rather than annually. Furthermore, he suggested assigning to the Secretary General the task of harmonising the programmes and activities of the Organisation and the coordination of activities of all OIC organs and bodies. He further recommended that the Secretary General should coordinate the positions of the Member States in the various regional and international organisations, and that OIC groups could be constituted to take part in important specialised institutions under the UN; the Secretary General should, he suggested, have the means to follow up on the activities at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, WHO, IFAD, ECOSOC, the Human Rights Council and other relevant organisations. He consid-

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

ered that the Secretary General should hold the power to make all key appointments in the General Secretariat in consultation with the Ministerial Conference, and suggested that the Secretary General should recruit consultants and part-time staffers if required, as well as experts. He endorsed the idea of creating a strategic planning division within the OIC, and supported the establishment of the media observatory on Islamophobia.

As for Dr Mahathir, he expressed the opinion that one must make a necessary distinction between Western and Islamic values, as they do not necessarily converge. He referred, for example, to the concept of marriage and the family and some other values. He was critical of the phenomenon of globalisation and said that good governance had to be defined in the context of the Muslim world's values as they were not always compatible with the Western notion of democracy. Alluding to the means available in the Muslim world, he argued that more quality media channels should be created. He proposed that Muslim countries establish centres of excellence and invest in science and technology to ensure a reverse brain drain from the West, while he favoured employing non-Muslims in centres of research and universities in the Muslim world. Dr Mahathir also called for action against poverty and for investment in infrastructure; he suggested that the Organisation adopt pro-poor policies to bring about changes in their lives. Furthermore, Dr Mahathir called for strengthening of the Secretary General's role to allow him to undertake the actions and initiatives required to reinvigorate the performance of the OIC, and proposed the idea of extending the Secretary General's term of office to five years. He also urged that the OIC should do its utmost to secure a seat for one of its Member States on the UN Security Council.

- A Committee of Eminent Jurists reviews the Charter

When the High Level Advisory Panel completed its review, the next stage, transforming their ideas into a legally sound document, became imperative. Having this objective in mind, a Committee of Eminent Jurists was constituted. It was headed by the former OIC Secretary General Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, who was also a former Attorney-General and Law Minister of Pakistan. Other members invited to sit on the committee were Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, member of the International Law Commission; Ambassador Javad Zarif, the former

Permanent Representative of Iran to the UN; and Professor Babacar Gueye of Senegal. The committee convened under my chairmanship in Jeddah on 3 and 4 March 2007. It prepared a draft which was circulated to all the Member States and submitted to the meeting of the senior officials of the OIC to be held from 14 to 16 April 2007.

Since the review of the Charter was considered a priority in line with the Mecca Summit's decision, the senior officials' meeting concluded that reviewing and amending the Charter would be better served by an open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGWGE). The Group was composed of representatives of Member States, and held its first meeting from 6 to 10 May 2007 in Jeddah. It examined the various provisions with a sense of dedication and accommodation and reached agreement on many of the provisions of the Charter. However, the document could not be finalised, as the task was too arduous and time-consuming. The expert meeting reported the result of its work to the senior officials' meeting, held in Islamabad on 15 May 2007, prior to the Thirty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers which met from 15 to 17 May 2007.

The expected deliberations at the level of senior officials could not take off as some Member States argued at the outset that the Group of Experts still required more time to review the draft, and the Secretary General was requested to convene at an appropriate time another meeting of the Group of Experts to complete the review of the Charter. A number of the African Member States had formulated remarks on certain issues. The OIC's incoming Presidency, Senegal, played a constructive role in reconciling these views with those of other OIC Member States by calling a meeting of all the OIC's African Member States, which was held separately in Dakar, to examine the outstanding provisions and facilitate consensus on them. The meeting took place in Dakar on 7 September 2007 and managed to streamline and reconcile the African group's position on those provisions. One of their decisions was to maintain the original name of the organisation (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) without any change, but to change the designation of the annual OIC 'Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers' to 'Council of Foreign Ministers'.

Another meeting of the Group of Experts was then held in Jeddah from 10 to 13 September 2007. It managed to reach consensus on most of the remaining articles, but some provisions bearing on political and organisational matters, notably the right to self-determination, the

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

formulation of observer status, entry into force and ratification, remained pending. Yet another meeting of the Group of Experts was convened from 3 to 5 November 2007 in Jeddah, but after lengthy discussions the outstanding issues still remained unresolved and some Member States wanted to introduce new provisions to the draft of the Charter. At this juncture, it appeared that the conflicting positions of Member States on certain issues were irreconcilable.

I was keen to see that the principle of consensus should be the basis of adoption of the provisions of the Charter, keeping in line with the spirit of Islamic brotherhood and solidarity. As the discussions were inconclusive, I was asked to convene another meeting of the Group of Experts. It was held on 5–10 January 2008. Again, this meeting failed to reach a consensus on the outstanding issues. It was decided, therefore, to report the matter to the forthcoming meeting of the Senior Officials preceding the Eleventh OIC Summit in Dakar.

The host of the Eleventh Summit, in consultation with the Secretary General, decided to convene the senior officials' meetings in two separate sessions prior to the date of the Summit. The first session was held in Saly Portugal (Senegal) on 18–20 February 2008. During this session, the senior officials decided to finalise the review of the Charter and the host government made concerted efforts to reconcile the different viewpoints. In spite of my strenuous efforts to break the stalemate, the meeting succeeded only in achieving minor progress on the unresolved issue of observer status. I invited Dr Nabil Araby—who had taken part in the High Level Advisory Panel in 2006—to the meeting to expound on the different procedures through which international agreements would enter into force, in light of international law and practice. Dr Araby gave his presentation in his capacity as a legal expert by interpreting the provisions of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

The second session of the Senior Officials Meeting resumed its deliberation on the Charter in Dakar from 8 March 2008 at a very slow pace, and ended again in a stalemate. It was finally decided to refer the unresolved issues to the ministerial meeting to be held in preparation for the Summit.

Despite an escalation to this level, there seemed to be no sign of agreement. The tumultuous deliberations centred mainly on the entry into force of the amended Charter and on the question of ratification. Cheikh Dr Tidiane Gadio, Foreign Minister of Senegal and chairman of the meeting, used all his diplomatic skills to reconcile the diverging

viewpoints of his colleagues the foreign ministers, with no success. At the end of a very long day of protracted discussions Dr Gadio improvised a very long and passionate appeal, exhorting his colleagues to consider the present situation of the *Ummah* and the challenges facing it, and called upon them to be more flexible and not to allow this occasion of amending the Charter to be lost. This eleventh hour plea had a positive impact, and the positions on the conflicting views began to soften.

It was at the level of the Summit that the last outstanding provisions of the Charter were agreed under the Chairmanship of the President of Senegal, Maître Abdoulaye Wade, who used all his persuasive abilities to hammer out an agreement on all pending issues with the help of other Member States and myself.

The new Charter was unanimously adopted on 14 March 2008, through a resolution of the Eleventh Islamic Summit,³ crowning an effort which had lasted two years and ushering the OIC and the Muslim world into a new historic era of invigorating solidarity and joint action. The changes brought and new elements incorporated in the Charter will be referred to in the forthcoming chapters.

Restructuring of the OIC and its Institutions

– Birth of a New Organ: Executive Committee of the OIC Troikas

Decisions by the Member States of the OIC had always been taken through the Conference of Foreign Ministers and the Summit. Over the past forty years, as Muslim countries were faced with aggression and occupation or confronted with issues of global magnitude, many international crises and situations warranted the convening of extraordinary conferences. These gatherings were solicited by one or several states, in consultation with the General Secretariat. In all these situations, the solidarity of the Islamic *Ummah* was very much needed and solicited.

The effectiveness of any intergovernmental organisation hinges upon rallying its members to deliberate on urgent issues within tight deadlines. Since the OIC does not have resident diplomatic representations accredited to it in Jeddah, decision-making is often difficult to obtain. The General Secretariat has been keen to invite the Member States to establish resident representations in Jeddah and the Saudi Arabian government has given assurances for facilitating the opening

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

of the resident missions there. However, only a few countries have responded.

During the deliberations of the Commission of Eminent Persons held in Putrajaya in January 2005, I alluded to the difficulty that the OIC was experiencing in urgently reacting to unforeseen crises, conflicts and emergencies facing Member States that would erupt from time to time. I proposed the possible remedy of resorting to the 'Troika' method used by other organisations, to take decisions on such urgent situations during the periods when there are no Summits or ministerial meetings envisioned—the ministerial and Summit meetings are only held yearly and once every three years respectively. On the basis of this proposal, the Commission of Eminent Persons and later the 2005 brainstorming meeting of scholars in Mecca examined the decision-making process in the OIC, and it too concluded that the Organisation faced inherent difficulties in reacting to urgent crises. For guidance, they examined the decision-making processes of other intergovernmental organisations such as the EU, and found that, in similar situations, periodic meetings at the highest level, on the basis of Troikas, were a routine practice.

The two meetings of the eminent persons and scholars thus proposed the creation of an OIC Executive Committee on the basis of the Troika. The composition of the Troika was determined on the basis of the chairmanship of the Summit and the Ministerial Conference. Three Member States—the current, the former and the incumbent chairs of the OIC Summits—are eligible to sit on the Troika. Similarly, the current, the former and the incumbent chairs of the Conference of Foreign Ministers take a seat on the Troika. The host government, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, remains a permanent member of the Troika. As for the Secretary General of the Organisation, he is an ex-officio member.

The formula, which in my capacity as the Secretary General I suggested as a workable solution, was to make the Committee broad-based to include not only the Troika's members, but also the concerned and interested Member States who desire to attend the meetings.

On 17 January 2006 the General Secretariat convened the first meeting of the Executive Committee at the level of OIC ambassadors and permanent representatives based in Jeddah and Riyadh, to discuss the launch of the Troika. It was an historic meeting in terms of implementing the proposal. The Member States supported the formation of the Committee and decided to cooperate fully with the Secretary General.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Another meeting was convened by the Secretary General on 14 February 2006 with a view to examining the draft of the document on the Executive Committee's Rules of Procedures.

The first ministerial level meeting of the OIC Executive Committee was held in Jeddah on 15 March 2006 to discuss the defamatory cartoons in Denmark, the question of Palestine, and the situation in Iraq. The meeting was chaired by the Foreign Minister of Yemen, the Chairman of the Thirty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. Later, the Executive Committee met on various occasions to address other issues of importance to the Member States.

In June and July 2006 Israel launched a massive attack on Lebanon, launching air strikes and moving its forces into Lebanese territory in a naked aggression against a Member State. At the same time, Israeli forces used excessive and disproportionate force against the Hamas authorities in Gaza. I consulted with the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Tenth Summit, and the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Dr Siniora, and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, as well as the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz, who played a pivotal role in insisting on an OIC meeting to deal with these two crises in Lebanon and Palestine. It was decided that a meeting of the Executive Committee should be held in Putrajaya at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 3 August 2006. The meeting was held as planned and issued two strong declarations condemning the Israeli aggression and the inhuman treatment meted out to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories; thus, as a meeting at that level, it set a new precedent. At the end of the deliberations of the Executive Committee it was resolved to call for a meeting of the UN General Assembly under the 'Uniting for Peace' provision, to tackle the situation in the Middle East, in a bid to side-track the stalemate and voice concern at the UN Security Council's inability to act on that issue. This decision put pressure on the UN Security Council and induced its members to meet for a decision on the Middle East crisis.

These two meetings firmly entrenched the functioning of the OIC Executive Committee as a new organ of the Organisation. The OIC now had an expeditious mechanism capable of reacting to crisis situations that might affect Member States.

The Executive Committee met again in November 2006 to discuss the deteriorating situation in Palestine. Two more meetings of the

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

Executive Committee were held on 22 February 2007 and 3 February 2008 to deliberate on the Israeli aggression against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to discuss the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip. The Committee then met again on 3 January 2009 to discuss the large-scale, blatant Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in which thousands of Palestinians were killed and injured. It is hoped that more frequent meetings of the Committee will take place to review progress in all fields, take new initiatives and actions, and not limit itself to react to crisis situations. The rules of the Committee stipulate that biannual meetings should be held to follow up on the implementation of decisions.

The Executive Committee mechanism has certainly provided us with the opportunity of organising open-ended Summit or ministerial-level emergency meetings without waiting for completion of the process of obtaining a two thirds quorum, as is required for full-fledged emergency Summit or Ministerial Council sessions.

Reform of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy

The Islamic Fiqh Academy was established as a subsidiary organ of the OIC through a resolution of the Islamic Summit in Mecca/Taif in 1981. Its statute, adopted by the Thirteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Niamey in 1982, laid down its objectives:

- a) Achieving Islamic unity in theory and practice, through personal, social and international human behaviour and according to Islamic Sharia, and
- b) Inducing Islamic countries to adhere to their faith and study the problems of contemporary life and make efforts as well as issuing rulings and solutions for these problems on the basis of the Islamic Sharia.

Since its inception in 1982, the Academy has delivered many useful opinions on questions of Sharia. It also took it upon itself to organise various seminars on economic, social and medical issues. It even set up a committee on financial and economic matters. The most critical issue presently confronting the Muslim world is the issuing of *fatwas* by fanatical groups or individuals that advocate violence and terrorism. Such erroneous rulings have tarnished the image of Islam as a peaceful religion that inherently abhors and condemns such practices. The responsibilities of the Islamic Fiqh Academy, in countering new false religious rulings, have thus increased.

Following the discussions of the scholars prior to the Mecca Extraordinary Summit, it was recommended that the Academy too should undergo restructuring to be able to become an effective interlocutor on behalf of the Muslim world, in rebutting Islamophobia issues and the defamation of Islam.

The first task for the General Secretariat was thus to revise the Academy's statute, as requested by the Ten-Year Programme of Action. In this context, the General Secretariat, in February 2006, invited a group of jurists from different schools of Islamic jurisprudence to start this process, with the objective of coordinating *fatwas*, countering religious extremism, combating the accusations of heresy made against some Muslim schools of thought, and disseminating the values of moderation and tolerance.⁴ The scholars lucidly and extensively analysed the cultural and intellectual issues confronting the Muslim *Ummah*. They noted that these challenges required the Academy to be overhauled and elevated to higher standards in order to endow it with credibility and respectability across the Muslim world. They proposed giving the Academy a broad-based and inclusive consultative mission which may involve scholars from Muslim countries, nominated by their governments, as well as scholars who could be enlisted to provide expert opinion.

To that end, a draft for a new statute of the Academy was prepared by two eminent scholars, Dr Salim Al-Awa and Sheikh Belkhodja. This draft statute was considered and later approved by the jurists. It was then presented to an open-ended working group drawn from the Member States. The statute was approved and adopted by the Thirty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Baku in June 2006. By virtue of its Article XVIII, the Statute came into force on the day of its adoption by the Conference.

The new Statute stipulates that under its new name of International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Academy shall function independently to realise a set of objectives which include the following:

1. Achieving intellectual harmony among Muslims;
2. Undertaking collective interpretation (*ijtihad*) of contemporary issues and problems;
3. Coordinating among authorities issuing religious rulings (*fatwas*);
4. Countering doctrinal bigotry, religious extremism and the excommunication of Islamic schools;

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

5. Refuting any religious rulings that negate Islamic constants, and
6. Expressing religious opinions on issues of daily life.

In addition, according to the new Statute, the Academy would aim at:

1. Increasing interest in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh);
2. Directing response to the needs for Fiqh opinions on developments and challenges facing the Islamic Ummah;
3. Issuing religious rulings to help Muslim communities outside Islamic countries;
4. Reconciling the various differences in Islamic schools of thought by emphasising common ground;
5. Elucidating Sharia rulings and positions on matters of public importance; and
6. Renewing Islamic jurisprudence.

Making practical use of the new mandate and objectives of the reformed Academy, I resorted to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) to help in putting an end to the sectarian killing between the religious Sunni and Shia factions in Iraq, which resulted in many massacres of both sides. The IIFA was called upon to draw up the ‘Makkah Al-Mukarramah Declaration on the Iraqi Situation’, to be agreed upon and signed by Iraqi scholars of both Sunni and Shia traditions with a view to outlawing sectarian killing in Iraq and declaring such practices as crimes, prohibited and proscribed by the Sharia Law.

A meeting of Iraqi eminent religious scholars was held to this effect in Mecca on 21 October 2006. During this meeting, the Iraqi religious scholars pledged to stop and denounce the sectarian killing. It is worth mentioning that this initiative was successful and such killing in Iraq on the basis of religious affiliation has substantially decreased.

On the basis of another initiative of the Secretary General, the Academy was then called upon to elaborate a practical plan to deepen the dialogue between Islamic schools of thought. A group of eminent Muslim scholars met twice in Jeddah, in May and June 2008, at the headquarters of the OIC, and prepared a plan and several projects to this end. This meeting of scholars will submit the outcome of its deliberations to a large meeting of Muslim scholars.

Restructuring and Reviving the Role of the International Islamic News Agency

The International Islamic News Agency is one of the oldest specialised institutions of the OIC. It was established in 1972 by a decision of the Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah. At the time of its establishment, its objectives were geared towards coordinating activities among the Member States' news agencies, disseminating information on Islamic issues, promoting the rights of the Palestinian people, and encouraging joint Islamic action. Being a specialised agency within an intergovernmental organisation, it also had the responsibility of disseminating information, to a general audience, on the activities of the OIC and developments in all other fields bearing on inter-state cooperation between the Member States.

However, since its creation, the IINA has suffered from inadequate administrative and financial resources. It did not have regular correspondents in the important capitals of the world, nor did it have the ability to disseminate information about the activities of the OIC. These impediments were acknowledged at various meetings of the OIC Information Ministers, but those meetings provided neither structural change nor any solutions to its pressing difficulties.

- A New Concept for the IINA

In September 2006 the Seventh Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held in Jeddah, took important decisions in light of a decision of the Mecca Summit, which had emphatically called for the reform of the IINA and the Islamic States Broadcasting Organisation (ISBO).

The conference recommended constituting a Board of Directors for the IINA, for a period of two years, to be headed by the chair of the conference. In pursuance of the Information Ministers' decision, the Board met in February 2007 to discuss the strategy to make the IINA more efficient. After lengthy deliberations, the Board decided to constitute a three-member committee, consisting of Turkey, Malaysia and Senegal. This committee would prepare, in light of the proposals received from the Member States, the terms of reference for a study to be carried out by a consulting agency funded by the Islamic Development Bank. The Board also constituted a follow-up committee. In

REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

2008, the Board of Directors appointed a new Director General, who has been given the task of rejuvenating the agency in accordance with the aspirations of the Member States.

As part of the IINA reform, it was realised that it was crucial to hire capable and professional staff with the necessary background and perspective to advance the Muslim causes, and this required the readiness of Member States to fund the IINA. The cooperation of Member States in sharing information with the IINA was also seen as critical. However, the ultimate objective of operating at the international level and establishing channels to win a global audience is one that needs to be left to the private sector.

The process of reform of the IINA is still ongoing and needs more dedicated effort to realise the objectives envisaged for this Agency. A professional international consultancy company has been asked to carry out a scientific study for its reorganisation, aimed at identifying the ways and means of developing the Agency's performance. The study has been completed, and its conclusions were unanimously adopted by the IINA Executive Board during its 24th session, held in Jeddah on 14–15 January 2009, before being submitted to and adopted at the Eighth Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held on 25–28 January 2009 in Rabat.

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

The OIC is active in many fields as it strives to promote peace through conflict resolution, assist disfavoured Muslim communities in non-member states, and, on another level, convey a true image of Islam in contribution to dialogue and understanding between peoples of the world.¹ In these tasks it seeks to co-ordinate and project the external relations of the Muslim world in certain key areas.

In this respect, the OIC seeks to work firmly within the international system, and within the confines of international law and norms. The key to the OIC's external activities is to conduct advocacy on behalf of the Muslim world as a whole, and to engage with the wider world at all levels for this cause. Internally, the OIC seeks to act as a platform and a forum to resolve differences between Member States, and thus further peace and security.

Peace and security in the world depend much on tolerance and conflict resolution through peaceful means, always bearing in mind that our world is composed of different nations, each of which should be allowed to play its rightful role in the progress of human civilisation. The pursuit of global peace is the ultimate goal of humanity, including the Muslim world. Muslim states are signatories to the OIC Charter as well as the UN Charter, both of which have enshrined this aim as a major principle. In pursuit of this objective, the Muslim world has to seek cooperation through the platform of the OIC with other international actors, including international organisations.

Accordingly, the OIC has long sought the resolution of a host of conflicts that have troubled its Member States. The most prominent conflict affecting the Muslim world is no doubt the Palestine conflict, which became an issue well before 1948 and has resulted in several wars. The arson attack against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in fact, was the immediate reason for the establishment of the OIC in 1969. The OIC has since sought to redeem the rights of the Palestinians, including their right to statehood. Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian territories keeps the question of Palestine at the centre stage of the OIC's activities. Afghanistan used to be a permanent item on the OIC agenda when it was occupied by the former Soviet Union and later when it was engulfed in civil war. The occupation of Iraq in 2003 was also of major concern to the OIC, as well as the unstable and volatile situation in the wider Middle East. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was another matter that featured prominently on the OIC agenda, where the ongoing conflict in Somalia also features. The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir is another issue in which the OIC is actively involved in seeking a solution. Similarly, the issue of Cyprus has also been on the OIC agenda for several years.

At the same time, the OIC provides assistance to Muslim minorities and communities living in non-member states, who account for almost one-third of the world's Muslim population. In cases where such minorities and communities have been confronted with discrimination on the basis of their religion and have suffered from infringement of their human rights, the OIC has voiced its concern and worked to secure the rights of these minorities and the preservation of their distinct cultural and religious identities. It has done so by engaging in contact with the respective governments and working within the legal framework of the nations concerned. The OIC's activities in relation to the cases of Muslim minorities in the southern Philippines, southern Thailand, Myanmar, Western Thrace, and the Chinese Province of Xingjian will be outlined in Chapter 6.

Moreover, the OIC is also actively involved in combating the various misconceptions and antagonistic views about Islam emanating from divisive social, political and media quarters in Western societies, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. Examples of these include the association of Islam with violence and terrorism and the publication of defamatory materials against Islam, in total disregard for the sensitivities of Muslims. This antagonistic environment and religious

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

intolerance jeopardised the rights of Muslims to enjoy fair and just treatment in, amongst other areas, employment, housing and education. Many fair-minded people find in these practices of racial intolerance similarity to what happened to Jewish communities before the Second World War. Activities undertaken by the OIC in the face of this problem are outlined in the chapter devoted to Islamophobia.

Expanded strategies

A number of OIC objectives mentioned in its Charter require the OIC to promote Islamic solidarity and cooperation, make efforts to eliminate colonialism and support international peace and security. Other objectives, furthermore, require the OIC to support the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any Member State under occupation, and to support and empower the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self determination and establish their sovereign state with Jerusalem (Al-Quds Al-Sharif) as its capital, while safeguarding its historic and Islamic character as well as the sacred places therein. In short, the objectives require the OIC to defend all Muslim causes; so it has had to deal with different causes of prime concern to the Muslim world.

The role of the Secretary General as coordinator on behalf of the Member States is to ensure that progress is carried out on these issues and others that emerge in a manner that gains the consensus of the Member States on the various strategies proposed and/or implemented.

With respect to joint Islamic action and its engagement with the international system, over the last five years the Member States agreed, at their Foreign Ministers conferences, to the following strategies:

1. Strengthening the OIC's coordination on issues of concern through a fast-track mechanism of recognising and escalating grave and serious situations. As outlined in preceding chapters, we did this by convening the meetings of the OIC Executive Committee at short notice, evolving common positions, and keeping the decisions democratic and participatory by inviting the concerned and interested Member States. These measures have enhanced the Organisation's effectiveness over the last three years. Meetings have been convened on Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan, and on issues such as the defamation of religion and other issues of common concern for the Member States.

2. Making the annual ministerial meetings purposeful by introducing thematic sessions on issues of importance and reducing the repetition of unnecessary concerns. Such efforts have allowed greater focus on substantive issues.
3. Political engagement with members of the European Union, the United States, the Russian Federation and other important states of the international community.
4. Cooperative and structured relations with international and regional organisations: in particular, the United Nations and its various agencies, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Council of Europe and similar organisations engaged in conflict resolution.
5. Maintaining regular consultation with the Member States, in particular with African members, to contribute to their economic and social development.
6. Forging of effective coordination of the OIC groups on issues of concern at the United Nations, and encouraging OIC members in various capitals to form their groups for better coordination on all issues with the respective host states.
7. Reaching out and establishing a presence for the OIC in the Member States where grave causes require presence on the ground. This has been done through the establishment of OIC offices in such countries and by frequently dispatching missions to engage in the role of accepted mediator.
8. Devising mechanisms to involve civil society organisations in Muslim countries and in the West for creating amity between people in the West and the Muslim world. At the same time, seeking the cooperation of NGOs in Muslim countries to assist in rescue and humanitarian relief activities needed in case of natural or man-made disasters.

Recently, the OIC Member States have provided the Secretary General with greater flexibility and authority in carrying out his duties. This was enshrined in the Ten-Year Programme of Action whereby the Secretary General was given a more meaningful role than the post had involved during the 35 years that followed the OIC's establishment. One of the reasons the Secretary General has been given more authority to act in the name of Member States has been the change in inter-

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

national politics. Intra- and intergovernmental organisations now play a more significant role in advancing the common interests of regional groupings at the global level than they did before. The office of the Secretary General has been given the responsibility of coordinating the implementation of policies which in some instances lies outside the realm of the membership.

OIC action with regard to some political causes of the Muslim world

Some of the causes that perennially come to the fore of the OIC agenda are the thorniest and the most complicated in contemporary history and pose a serious challenge to the international community. It is important to highlight how, on all these issues, the OIC, through concerted diplomatic and political efforts, has enhanced the prospects of finding solutions.

Palestine

The political developments in the aftermath of the First World War put Palestine in upheaval. The British Mandate, which ruled Palestine between 1920 and 1948, encouraged several waves of politically inspired Jewish immigration into the country. The Jewish population in Palestine, which was estimated at 5 per cent of the total population at the turn of the century, skyrocketed, thanks to the waves of immigration encouraged by the Mandate, reaching 16 per cent by 1931 according to a British census.²

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly resolved by a two-thirds majority to endorse the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state (Resolution No. 181). The Partition Plan granted 55 per cent of Palestine to the Jews, who at that time totalled 30 per cent of the population, and who owned a mere 6 per cent of the land. One of the two states envisaged in the partition plan proclaimed its independence as Israel, and in the ensuing 1948 War it expanded to occupy 78 per cent of the territory of Palestine. As a result, 750,000 Palestinians, over half the indigenous population, fled or were expelled, to live until today as refugees in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, in the 1967 War, Israel occupied the remaining territory of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, causing a second exodus of Palestinians, estimated at more than half a million.

Finding a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian question, the core of the Middle East conflict, became an important item on the international agenda. International and regional efforts have focused on ending the Israeli occupation which started in 1967, establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel, and finding a just solution to the question of Palestinian refugees based on international resolutions. Such a two-state solution has been deemed a formula acceptable to the Palestinian people as well as to Arab and Muslim nations. In 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) expressed an unequivocal acceptance of the UN Security Council Resolutions on the two-state solution as its strategic option for achieving the national goals of the Palestinian people.

The Oslo process—which resulted in the signing by the two parties of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington on 13 September 1993—and the subsequent implementation agreements brought about important developments, such as the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces from certain Palestinian territories and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The Oslo process was based on the understanding that cooperation and mutual trust between the parties would eventually lead to ending the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state. It operated under the following guiding principles:

- i) the interim period would be of a limited duration;
- ii) nothing would be done to prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations; and
- iii) the final settlement would be consistent with UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which affirmed that territory could not be acquired by military force and established the “land for peace” as the basis for Arab-Israeli negotiations.

Despite the gigantic compromise made by the Palestinians in agreeing to establish their independent state on only 22 per cent of historic Palestine, Israel has continued, in blatant violation of the Oslo agreement and the international resolutions, to settle, occupy and confiscate more Palestinian lands. Therefore, the provision of Palestinian land under the two states solution became severely distorted.

Palestine has been the victim of various facets of the Israeli policy of occupation and expansion. The predominant strategy of Israel has

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

been to bring fundamental changes to the entire territory so that the political case of the Palestinian people may be defeated at any future juncture. Various acts of the Israeli government have not been checked. Through various means, including the entrenched settlements and the barricading of land with a concrete wall, Israel has not only violated the Oslo Agreement but continued to successively violate United Nations resolutions with impunity.

In recent years, the most flagrant violation has been the construction of the 'Wall' inside Palestinian territory, which constitutes a deliberate, illegal encroachment on Palestinian land. The International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion in 2004, declared that the Wall is illegal and violates international law, and called on Israel to cease its construction. It further called for the dismantling of the Wall and for payment of compensation for economic loss to the Palestinian people. The ruling stated that the court was not convinced that the construction of the Wall, along the route chosen, was the only means to safeguard the interests of Israel against the peril it has invoked as justification for the construction. Indeed, the Wall was devised as a means for Israel to reinforce its occupation, rather than for any security need.

Another strategy deployed by Israel has been large-scale ruthless aggression against the Palestinian people. It has made ordinary citizens victims of its tyranny, among other things by economic strangulation through the imposition of frequent economic blockades, blocking delivery of a regular supply of food, cutting off supplies of fuel and basic medical supplies, and creating a systematic denial of normal life for the Palestinians so that they are left with no option than to resign themselves to their fate. When this does not work, military might is launched with full force, by engaging helicopter gunships, missiles, tanks and other lethal weapons on unarmed Palestinian political protesters.

Israel has consistently violated international and humanitarian laws, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, with such intensity that even the victims have stopped counting these atrocities because of the impunity which Israel has enjoyed over the years. In fact, in recent years, the Israeli military has attacked numerous innocent people, destroyed their homes and taken thousands of political prisoners. It has detained over ten thousand people (including, children, women and the elderly). Among these detainees are Palestinian legislators and high-ranking office holders.

In recent years, the Israeli strategy of building new settlements, extrajudicial killings, economic strangulation, denial of rights, imprisonment without trial and use of force has been compounded. Additionally, Israel has perpetrated illegal activities in order to change the demographic, cultural and historic character of Al-Quds by actively encouraging the 'Israelification' of the city, by evicting tens of thousands of Palestinians from their homes in the city, confiscating their lands and properties and replacing them with Israeli settlers. Jewish synagogues were also built on Muslims' endowment property. Israel is presently taking steps to violate the most sacred shrines in the city. These include endangering the safety of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by building tunnels and underground roads. This tragic catalogue of offences is well documented and widely reported. So far, the international community has maintained a deafening silence over all of these unlawful acts, though it recognises the gravity of the situation. In many quarters, lip service has been paid to giving warnings to Israel; however, this has hardly had any impact.

As the *raison-d'être* of the OIC, the problem of Palestine has been predominantly significant in the Organisation's work. The OIC's Charter stipulated that it should support the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self determination and establish their sovereign state with Jerusalem/Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and to safeguard its historic and Islamic character. It is highly unusual for any international organisation to make a direct reference to a specific problem in its charter. However, by alluding to the Palestinian cause in its Charter, the OIC demonstrates its association with this cause, which also draws the support and sympathy of the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Because of this, for sure, the Palestinian question has an Islamic dimension instead of being a mere regional matter for the Arab states.

The First Islamic Summit of 1969, as mentioned earlier, affirmed its support for the restoration of Palestinian rights, thus establishing a firm OIC policy on the Palestinian cause. This cause has continued to be a top agenda item for all OIC meetings. It should be noted that according to its Charter, the OIC's seat should be in Jerusalem. The Jeddah headquarters are temporary, pending the liberation of Jerusalem (Al-Quds Al-Sharif). One of the OIC Assistant Secretaries General was designated exclusively as Assistant Secretary General for Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. An Al-Quds Committee was established exclusively for the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Likewise, all

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

OIC standing committees and subsidiary organs are required to promote the Palestinian cause in their respective activities.

From its formative years, the OIC's support for the national struggle of Palestinians took different shapes. On the diplomatic front, the OIC rendered different kinds of support to the PLO as the national representative of the Palestinian people. The United Nations well illustrates OIC diplomatic support for Palestine in international fora. The UN has been an important forum for supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinians as well as for confirming the illegal nature of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Occupied Territories. It is worth mentioning that all the Muslim Member States of the UN, except for Turkey, voted against Israel's application for UN membership in 1948. By the mid-1970s the number of Muslim countries increased considerably and they were able to block Israel's entry into several international institutions. At the same time, efforts of OIC Member States at the United Nations succeeded in securing observer status for the PLO. In a rare historic event, the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, thanks to OIC efforts, was invited to address the UN General Assembly in 1974. The following year, the UN General Assembly by its resolution 3376, with the support of the OIC Member States, established the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and requested it to recommend a programme of implementation to enable the Palestinians to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to their homes and property. It is self-evident that most of the United Nations resolutions supporting Palestinian rights have been taken with the support of all OIC Member States.

The United Nations was not the only forum for collective Islamic diplomatic work on the issue of Palestine. The collective efforts of OIC Member States over Israel's decision to declare Jerusalem as its permanent capital provided another good example of fruitful Islamic diplomatic endeavour. In a flagrant disregard of international legitimacy resolutions, especially the UN Security Council resolutions 446 and 452, Israel in 1980 declared what it called the Basic Law on Jerusalem, which meant the illegal and unilateral annexation of occupied East Jerusalem. The OIC position on Jerusalem has been that East Jerusalem, which was occupied by Israel in 1967, should be the capital of the independent Palestinian state and the seat of the OIC itself. Accordingly, an emergency Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which

was the second of its kind in the OIC's history, was held in Amman, on 11–12 July 1980; it took a firm position on the matter and decided to exert every possible effort to face the Israeli decision. A warning of serious consequences was given to those states supporting Israel's illegal decision to change the status of the occupied city of Al-Quds. Diplomatic efforts of the OIC managed to compel countries that had moved their embassies to Al-Quds to shift them back to Tel Aviv. El Salvador and Costa Rica were the only two countries which kept their embassies in Al-Quds, and all OIC Member States broke all kinds of relations with these two states.³ Equally significant, the OIC's concentrated diplomatic efforts at the United Nations succeeded when the Security Council adopted, on 20 August 1980, a decision condemning Israel, for the first time, with the support of fourteen states. The United States abstained and did not veto the resolution.

Based on its strongly held belief that the issue of Jerusalem is not just an Islamic cause but enjoys a wider religious dimension, the OIC maintained close coordination with the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. The Al-Quds Committee has stressed the religious dimension of Al-Quds in its broader sense throughout its meetings and activities. Economic assistance has been another type of OIC support to the Palestinians in their national struggle. Important in this field was the establishment of a number of funds to help the Palestinian struggle and the preservation of the historic character of Jerusalem; the Al-Quds Fund, Bait Mal Al-Quds, is an example. The Islamic Development Bank has been instrumental in supporting the Palestinian cause by carrying out several development projects in Palestine.

At the forefront of the peace efforts in Palestine, the OIC has demonstrated continuous support for Palestinian rights and demanded that the peace process should lead to full Israeli withdrawal to the borders of 4 June 1967, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in all the Palestinian lands occupied by Israel in 1967, and the return of the Palestinian refugees. Although the OIC was not invited to the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, the Sixth Islamic Summit, held in Dakar in 1991, expressed support for the peace process, thus establishing a firm policy supporting the peace process and agreements reached therein. OIC support for Middle East peace efforts was also manifested in the adoption of the Arab Peace Plan by all OIC conferences since the inauguration of this Plan by the Arab Summit in 2003.

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

The OIC continues to reiterate that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without the full withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds/East Jerusalem as its capital, and the implementation of the relevant UN resolutions. The OIC considers that Israel's settlement activities and unilateral actions not only hinder the peace process but also increase tension and frustration in the Middle East. Therefore, the international community, and the United Nations in particular, should shoulder their responsibilities in compelling Israel to abide by international law, implement UN resolutions and peace agreements, live up to its obligations and engage in a serious, purposeful peace process that should end its occupation and enable the Palestinian people to regain their national rights.

Palestinian national rights have enjoyed indisputable Islamic support. The regular sessions of the OIC Conferences of Foreign Ministers have repeatedly condemned Israeli aggression and violations and continuously called for implementation of the relevant UN resolution on this matter.

The Palestinian elections in February 2006 were carried out in a fair and transparent manner and were monitored by international institutions including the OIC, and resulted in Hamas gaining a majority in the Palestinian Parliament. This result was not without controversy. Many international quarters were not pleased with this result and consequently economic assistance by major donor countries was suspended.

The OIC's position on the results of the elections was clear. We considered it a genuine democratic outcome expressed by the Palestinians. In a statement issued after the elections, I emphatically stated, during the visit of Hamas' leader Khaled Mishal to the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on 19 March 2006, that the democratic outcome should not be judged according to double standards and the international community should give the newly elected government a chance. The stiffened posture of Hamas was also discussed, and Hamas was advised to address the issues with a pragmatic and realistic approach, bearing in mind the mood of the international community. The OIC's position was reiterated when the then Foreign Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Dr Mahmoud Zahar, visited the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah on 18 April 2006 for bilateral consultations.

Meanwhile, I had regular consultations with President Mahmoud Abbas and other senior leaders of Fatah to reconcile the internal differences between the two Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas. In July 2006, Nabil Sha'at visited the OIC Headquarters, as the Palestinian President's Special Envoy. Extensive talks took place regarding the two political groups' divergent positions on governance. Realising the stalemate between the two groups, I decided to personally visit Palestine on 19–20 December 2006. There I met President Abbas in Ramallah and Prime Minister Ismael Hanniyah in Gaza to bridge the gap in trust with the aim of unifying the ranks of Palestinians. I managed to convince the leaders of both factions to put an end to hostilities on 19 December 2006. This was followed by extensive shuttle diplomacy which took me to visit Gaza, Ramallah and Damascus in a bid to consolidate the cease-fire and to start a Palestinian national dialogue. Senior OIC delegations were also entrusted with various conciliation missions to Palestine.

Significant progress was achieved through this shuttling between various Palestinian representatives. We suggested establishing a fact-finding committee, composed of judges nominated by both Fatah and Hamas and other acceptable judges from Member States, to investigate the allegations of excesses and killings committed by both sides. Although the suggestion was accepted in my presence by the two parties, it has never been materialised.

In February 2007 strenuous efforts exerted by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia succeeded in persuading Fatah and Hamas to agree on the content of the 'Mecca Declaration'. Accordingly, a Palestinian National Unity Government was formed in March 2007.

On 17 March 2007 I made my second visit to Gaza, where I witnessed, as the only international guest, the swearing-in ceremony of the new Palestinian National Unity Government. I held talks with President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismael Hanniyah. During the stay, I was able to visit Al-Aqsa University where I was briefed on the plight of the education sector in Palestine and discussed with university staff on suitable modalities to help this sector.

However, after the formation of the National Unity Government, in which Saudi Arabia played a significant role, certain things happened and the conflict between the two factions resurfaced. In June 2007, Hamas resorted to military action to take over authority in the Gaza Strip. This act, which claimed the lives of many Palestinians, forced

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

President Abbas to dismiss the National Unity Government. These internal discords between Palestinian factions, needless to say, weakened the Palestinian cause and Israel took full advantage of the situation to commit renewed aggressions.

This chaotic situation in Palestine coincided with a very serious development between Israel and Lebanon. In June 2006, skirmishes on the Lebanese border between Israel and Hezbollah expanded to a very large conflict. The Israeli army moved across international borders and into Lebanon. The ensuing bombing of civilian targets in Southern Beirut by the Israeli air force led to vast scale destruction of civilian facilities and 1,500 deaths. Simultaneously, the Israeli military escalated its aggression against the Gaza Strip, attacking civilian targets.

With the scope of the crisis widening, there was serious apprehension that Israeli aggression would expand into a larger conflict in the Middle East. As the situation was evolving, an extraordinary ministerial meeting was seriously considered by some Member States. In my consultations with Member States, other political options were also considered. My proposal to convene a meeting of the Executive Committee with extended participation received endorsement from the majority of OIC members. A leading role was played by the Chairman of the Tenth Islamic Summit, the then Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia, and the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz, towards convening the Extended Meeting of the Heads of State and Government (Putrajaya, 3 August 2006) on the issues of Palestine and Lebanon. The meeting was attended by 18 Heads of State and Government and foreign ministers⁴ who adopted two strong declarations condemning the Israeli raids and aggression against Lebanon, and the occupation and the unrelenting aggression against the Palestinian people, and called for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders.

The OIC Executive Committee's Declaration on Lebanon condemned the relentless Israeli aggression against Lebanon and charged Israel with full responsibility for the consequences of its acts. The meeting expressed the OIC's concern at the inability of the United Nations Security Council to take the necessary actions for a ceasefire, and demanded that the Council fulfil its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security without any further delay. It exhorted the Council to order and enforce an immediate and unconditional comprehensive ceasefire. In the event of failure by the Security Council to act immediately, the meeting called upon all OIC Member

States to be united in supporting the convening of a meeting of the UN General Assembly under the ‘Uniting for Peace’ provision, in cooperation with other Member States of the UN.

Strongly convinced that there should be no impunity for violations by Israel of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, the meeting called for the immediate convening of a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council as well as a meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to address these violations.

The declaration on Palestine also condemned the abduction and detention of the Palestinian cabinet ministers, government officials, parliamentarians and other high officials and called for their immediate and unconditional release. In this declaration, the UN Security Council was urged to assume responsibility to force Israel to respect international law and cease its illegitimate practices, including imposing collective punishment and unilateral sanctions on the Palestinian people and their economy. The declaration also denounced the ongoing illegal construction and expansion of settlements and the separation wall, which are aimed at annexing Palestinian land and property and altering the demographic and geographical character of the Palestinian Territories. The serious humanitarian situation and relief needs were also emphasised. The declaration exhorted the UN to convene an international conference on the Middle East to deliberate on a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the region, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, with the participation of the UN Security Council’s permanent members, interested parties, and OIC Member States.

On a different track, we established contact with the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Presidency of the European Union, and other major powers and urged them to put pressure on Israel to halt hostilities. The subsequent meeting of the OIC Executive Committee would come to set a new precedent for OIC response to a crisis. For the first time in the OIC’s history—where such crises would in the past have led to the convening of an extraordinary session of Foreign Ministers—the new mechanism of Troikas, devised in early 2006, was used to deal with a situation warranting members’ action at the highest level. What we observed was that the UN Security Council had waited almost two months after the start of Israel’s aggression against Lebanon to adopt resolution 1701 on 11 August 2006, but regrettably had failed to

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

address the situation in Palestine. Had it not been for the Troika meeting's strong message, there is no doubt that the international community would not have been influenced to rouse the UN Security Council to take even this belated action against Israeli aggression.

The Executive Committee was again convened on the situation in Palestine three times in the succeeding years. On 8 November 2006, the Israeli shelling of civilian quarters in the town of Beit Hanoun killed scores of people and injured many. Again the OIC deemed it necessary to hold an urgent meeting of the Executive Committee. I, in my capacity as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee, believed that urgent action was needed at the international level. On 18 November 2006, in Jeddah, another meeting of the Executive Committee was convened. The Security Council, which had met earlier, failed to take a decision on the massacre of Beit Hanoun, despite the admission of guilt and culpability by the Israeli military, as expressed by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, who confessed that it was a regrettable incident and offered to provide medical assistance to the victims of the attack. The UN Human Rights Council commissioned the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu to investigate the Israeli bombing of Beit Hanoun, but the Archbishop was denied access to Gaza by Israel and could not accomplish his mission. However, he was able to travel to Gaza at a later stage and compiled his report, which was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in 2008.

The OIC Executive Committee, in its meeting on the Beit Hanoun events, took important decisions and called for implementation of the UN Human Rights Council resolution 1/3-S which recommended the establishment of a high level international fact-finding mission to investigate Beit Hanoun and Israeli crimes. It also called for prosecution of Israeli officials (enforcing the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention) for the grave human rights violations perpetrated by them. The meeting requested the Member States and the IDB and private financial institutions to provide for rebuilding after the destruction caused to Beit Hanoun and the northern Gaza Strip by Israel, and provide treatment for the wounded; it decided to break the embargo and blockade imposed on the Palestinian people and sought action on the part of the international community to release tax revenue owed to the Palestinian National Authority.

In February 2007, another meeting of the Executive Committee was convened to urgently examine the new forms of Israeli aggression: the

illegal excavations underneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the construction of a synagogue in its immediate vicinity. The OIC Executive Committee again adopted a strong communiqué. Besides reiterating its position on all issues regarding the occupation, it called on the international community to force Israel to cease its activities in the vicinity of the Al Aqsa Mosque. The OIC group in New York was requested to follow up this matter at United Nations level.

In 2007 and early 2008, Israel added to its aggression against the Gaza Strip by completely choking the supply lines of all food, fuel and medical assistance to the territory. The collective punishment of Palestinians and the blockade imposed on Gaza created a virtual humanitarian disaster. The need to lift the siege of Gaza was the central focal point of the communiqué adopted by the OIC Executive Committee when it met in February 2008. The international community was once again called upon to assist in helping to put an end to the blockade. Humanitarian assistance, with the assistance of civil society organisations, was coordinated to help in alleviating the suffering in Gaza.

Over three years, then, every instance of Israeli aggression was met with a strong and urgent reaction from the Muslim world. The weight of the decisions taken by the OIC has been noticeable as the question of Palestine has gathered strong momentum at the UN General Assembly, at the Security Council, at the Human Rights Council and in UNESCO. Exerting such moral and political pressure on Israel may not have been possible in the past, since the OIC's decisions in such situations were previously provided only through extraordinary sessions of ministerial or Summit meetings which were always convened with difficulty. Now, although Israel continues to commit with impunity flagrant violations proscribed under humanitarian and international law, the reality is that OIC Member States' decisions on each facet of aggression by Israel send a distinct message to the international community at the right moment. This pro-active role by the Member States provides a new vibrant involvement on issues which, in the past, were either left for the Secretary General's good offices to coordinate or left only to the OIC Groups in the UN for coordination.

On 27 November 2007, the President of the United States convened a conference of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Annapolis. Among the invitees were the leaders of the Arab world, the EU, the United Nations, Russia, and a number of the OIC Member States such as Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Senegal. The conference

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

was held to make progress on the Road Map for Peace, and to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Secretary General, I represented the OIC at this conference. This testified to the role the OIC had played during the last three years; its presence on the forum was a recognition of the role it has in the international efforts to resolve the conflict in the Middle East.

The OIC's engagement in the Palestinian crisis is continuous. The Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar and the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Kampala in 2008 adopted strong resolutions on Palestine and its people's right to self-determination, establishing an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the Palestinian refugees' right of return. The Member States are routinely briefed on the evolving situation, and the OIC's media strongly and regularly highlight the OIC position on this issue.

Afghanistan

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan led to the convening of the first ever extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which took place in Islamabad in January 1980 and condemned the invasion as an outright violation of the Charters of both the OIC and the UN. Suspending the membership of the Soviet-installed regime of Babrak Karmal, the OIC called for an immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet forces, recommended a boycott of the Moscow Olympics, appealed to the international community for support for Afghan liberation movements, and repeatedly encouraged assistance for Pakistan and Iran, which at the height of the crisis would receive 3.5 million and 2 million refugees respectively. Crucially, during this time, the OIC was careful to maintain its criticism of the United States for its continuing support of Israel and the Camp David accords, thereby establishing itself as an independent and non-aligned organisation.

The OIC's resolutions on Afghanistan were implemented, with nearly all Muslim countries breaking diplomatic relations with Kabul. Significant funding was raised for Afghan resistance groups. The boycott of the Moscow Olympics was observed, and in November 1980 the UN General Assembly carried Resolution 35/37 condemning the Soviet invasion by a massive 111 votes. An OIC Committee on Afghanistan was also established in 1980 and the OIC offered its good offices for mediation between the Soviet government and the *Mujahideen*.

Over the next two years, the OIC continued its efforts to pursue complete Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, enlarging its Committee on Afghanistan and seeking opportunities for dialogue with the Soviets and Afghan resistance leaders. In fact, so successful had the OIC been in creating relationships of trust with the various parties that when, in August 1984, a US Senate study proposed that the US government should recognise a resistance government in exile, it suggested that any aid should be channelled through the OIC. In addition, when in 1984 the Soviet Air Force commenced bombardment of Pakistani territory, Pakistan, having declared itself committed to abiding by OIC decisions on Afghanistan, avoided entering the conflict itself, and turned to the OIC for multilateral support. For its part the Organisation condemned the loss of life and damage to property in Pakistan and commended the Pakistani Government for its restraint.

In the following years, the Afghanistan issue remained at the forefront of OIC activities. The Organisation maintained that the Soviet occupation and the government in Kabul were illegal, and nothing short of a complete withdrawal would be acceptable. On 6 August 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev sent a message to the Fifth Islamic Summit, held in Kuwait, promising to withdraw troops as part of a wider agreement to cease interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. As a token gesture, 8,000 troops had been withdrawn on the eve of the Summit. The OIC continued to closely monitor the Geneva negotiations, as well as the Geneva Agreement of 1988 between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and welcomed the withdrawal of the final contingent of Soviet soldiers from Afghan soil on 15 February 1989. Up until 1992, the OIC continued to broker agreements between the *Mujahideen* factions in order to prevent an outbreak of factional fighting. The warring parties were continually offered the use of the Organisation's good offices in order to facilitate a smooth transfer of power. Once fighting broke out between the *Mujahideen* factions, it was the OIC that brokered the Islamabad Accord of 1993, Article 10 of which gave the Organisation the authority to monitor a ceasefire. In 1993 the OIC agreed a proposal to send military observers to monitor the ceasefire, which unfortunately did not last. The OIC Secretary General's special emissary on Afghanistan was sent to Islamabad in January 1994 for a fresh round of talks with the Afghan leaders, and a special OIC Permanent Mission was established there in April of the same year.

When the Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's unilateral extension of his term of office finally plunged Afghanistan into the depths of

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

civil war, the OIC, as the only party enjoying the respect of all the Afghan leaders, was requested by Pakistan and the UN to take a leading role in mediation efforts. An OIC peace plan, proposing an interim government, a consultative assembly, free and fair elections, and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country was rejected in September. Another OIC initiative, culminating in the Tehran talks in late 1994, ended when the parties failed to reach agreement. The OIC made successive attempts over the next three years to mediate between the warring factions, with little success.

When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the OIC refused to recognise their legitimacy. Instead, the Organisation maintained its efforts to form a multi-ethnic broad-based government. In 1998 and 2000, the OIC in conjunction with the UN launched a fresh round of talks between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in Islamabad and Jeddah. Although they made significant headway, these talks also broke down. Relations with the Taliban deteriorated with the murder of nine Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan in September 1998, and with OIC criticism of the Taliban's treatment of women, education policies and strict press and media controls. However, the Organisation continued to maintain close contact and political cooperation with the UN on Afghanistan. It also continued to call upon Member States to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to the war-torn and famine-stricken areas of the country.

In 2001, the OIC, while condemning the attacks the US had suffered in September, strongly criticised the proposed US attacks on Afghanistan as amounting to aggression against the Afghan people and risking civilian casualties. The Member States and the institutions of the OIC, being individually or collectively engaged at all levels in assisting the Afghan people, are committed to extending continued support and assistance to the Government and people of Afghanistan towards sustainable development, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Organisation itself has also taken important steps in this regard, mainly through its Assistance Fund for the Afghan people in order to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly for health and education, as well as providing assistance to Afghan refugees and displaced persons, securing drinking water for some Afghan villages and contributing to international efforts for reconstruction and development.

With fifty-seven Member States and the energy of all its subsidiary, specialised and affiliated organs the OIC is an important and potent

stakeholder in Afghanistan. It has the capacity and means to contribute to the process of helping that country. It continues to call on its Member States to contribute to aid reconstruction programmes as well as the return of refugees. We have done our best in this direction and we remain committed to continue to support the Afghan people and Government in their struggle to bring peace, security and economic progress to their country.

Bosnia

The OIC showed prescience about the unfolding crisis in Yugoslavia when it invited representatives of the Muslim communities in Yugoslavia to the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Istanbul in 1991. Once hostilities had broken out in Bosnia, the OIC immediately provided humanitarian assistance to its government and called for immediate sanctions against Serbia, a demand that would later be echoed in a UN Security Council Resolution. The OIC also asked its Member States to withdraw their ambassadors from Belgrade, and all promptly complied.

As the situation worsened, an OIC emergency session was convened in Istanbul at the request of Iran, in June 1992, which expressed full solidarity with the Bosnian Government, condemned the killings, and demanded that the UN Security Council take enforcement measures to ensure an end to Serbian aggression, assuring full financial and material support for such a measure on its part. Turkey and Iran pledged troops also. An OIC contact group consisting of the permanent representatives to the UN of Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Senegal and Turkey, which had already been successful in tabling a number of resolutions on Bosnia, was reconstituted at ministerial level and expanded to include Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and the OIC Secretary General. On 25 August 1992, a resolution co-sponsored by forty-seven Muslim states calling for maintenance of the territorial integrity of Bosnia was carried in the UN General Assembly by a wide margin. Over the coming months, the OIC was to repeatedly call for the lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia and the enforcement of no-fly zones.

The Twenty-first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1993 also received a request from Amnesty International for the OIC to use its influence to end the war. As a result, the conference conveyed an urgent message to the UN Security Council urging it to take decisive

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

action to end Serbian aggression against Bosnia, to freeze all Serbian assets, and to withdraw state recognition from Serbia pending its compliance with UN resolutions. OIC Member States were also asked to sever economic ties with Serbia and to take action against any state supporting Serbian aggression. Moreover, \$210 million in aid was pledged by Muslim states at the conference.

The OIC consistently rejected the Vance-Owen peace plan as 'legitimising and rewarding aggression'. It also rejected the idea of 'safe havens' for Bosnian Muslims, arguing that the idea was unworkable and that the only solution lay in ending Serbian aggression. It also cautioned against any endorsement of the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines. At the UN World Conference on Human Rights held in Geneva in June 1993, the Organisation refused to sign the final declaration unless its resolution on Bosnia was included in the main text, insisting that for the OIC there was an absolute bottom line on Bosnia. The subsequent resolution demanding an end to Serbian aggression was passed by eighty-one votes to one. The Geneva Conference later urged the Security Council to take measures to end the killings in Bosnia.

In July 1993, the OIC ministerial Contact Group meeting held in Islamabad adopted a twenty-point Action Plan on Bosnia. Furthermore, in response to the UN Secretary General's request for 7,500 troops for the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia, the OIC pledged 17,000 troops from seven Member States. The offer was rejected by the European Union. In August 1993, the OIC released its report on the Bosnia crisis, criticising the UN and Western powers for their inaction. For the next few months the OIC continued to demand the lifting of the arms embargo, the establishment of war crimes tribunals, the payment of war reparations by Serbia to the Bosnian government, and the enforcement of the no-fly zones. On 21 September 1994, the OIC reacted strongly to the suggested withdrawal of British and French peacekeeping troops from Bosnia, and undertook to replace every soldier that was withdrawn and maintain the presence of Egyptian, Jordanian and Malaysian troops even if every other state contingent withdrew. The Organisation also denounced the UN Security Council decision to ease sanctions against Serbia.

By 1995, more than 200,000 people, 34,000 of them children, had been killed; a further 20,000 were missing and 2 million had been displaced from their homes in Bosnia. In July 1995, two UN-declared safe havens fell to the Serbs amidst terrible violence and killings. On 22

July 1995, in an emergency session held in Geneva, the OIC Contact Group on Bosnia, and shortly afterwards the Organisation itself, declared the arms embargo on Bosnia invalid. The meeting announced that the troops from Muslim countries in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) would not be withdrawn and would instead use enhanced fire-power to defend the Bosnians. For Pakistan's Foreign Minister, S.A. Ahmad Ali, this was 'the greatest and most serious challenge ever thrown to the UN during its fifty years of history'. Even before a meeting to finalise these arrangements had been convened, the UN had invited the OIC to send semi-armed personnel to monitor UN posts in Gorazde. The invitation was refused. The United States, alarmed at the OIC's unprecedented posture, introduced a new peace plan. This was also roundly rejected. The US advised the Serbs to make peace, as failure to do so would result in military action by Muslim ground forces. This advice laid the foundations for the Dayton Peace Accord.

The peace accord was signed on 13 December 1995 in the presence of OIC and European Union representatives. The two organisations pledged to cooperate with one another in peace-building and reconstruction efforts. The OIC established an Assistance Mobilisation Group (AMG) whose aims included strengthening Bosnia's defence capabilities. In 1995, the OIC had already secured pledges of \$241 million for Bosnia. When it became clear by June 1997 that only \$100 million of this had been received, a decision was taken to convene a bigger donor conference which would aim to raise up to \$1.4 billion by 1998. During this time, Bosnian soldiers had begun to receive military training in Bangladesh under the AMG programme. In 1997, an OIC Contact Group meeting in New York decided to coordinate the policies of Muslim states for UN debates. The OIC also pledged to take on monitoring of implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord.

By the end of the crisis, over four years, the OIC had dedicated one permanent working group, convened three emergency Conferences of Foreign Ministers and thirty coordination meetings, issued thirty-five resolutions, organised forty-five visits by the Secretary General's special envoys and dispatched ten special delegations to Bosnia. OIC resolutions regarding the non-recognition of Serbia, the freezing of its international assets, the constitution of war crimes tribunals, NATO air strikes against rebel strongholds: asserting UN control over the Serbs' heavy weapons, and the territorial integrity of Bosnia were almost all

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

implemented, in one way or another. Moreover, the OIC's Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) carried out several multi-sectoral projects in Bosnia, especially in the fields of reconstruction and preservation of the Bosnian urban, architectural and written heritage, in addition to publications and scholarly studies on the country's history, society and culture. All in all, it was an extraordinary demonstration of the collective Muslim political will, and the ability of the *Ummah* to organise itself in response to aggression against a Muslim people.

Jammu and Kashmir

The Jammu and Kashmir dispute, a legacy of the colonial period, remains unresolved and looms dangerously on the horizon of South Asia. Three wars have been fought between Pakistan and India and numerous local military conflicts have taken place, with the risk of escalation into a wider conflict. Since 1970, Kashmir has been a regular item on the OIC's agenda. The countries of the Muslim world have extended their unequivocal support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir for their right to self-determination, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

In 1989, almost thirty years after India's annexation of Kashmir, a popular uprising in Indian-held Kashmir was brutally suppressed by the Indian military. As a result, in 1990, the Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers adopted a resolution calling on Pakistan and India to resolve the issue in light of the 1948 and 1949 UN Security Council resolutions that called for the demilitarisation of the state of Kashmir and a UN-sponsored plebiscite to determine whether the people of Kashmir desire accession to India or Pakistan. The conference also expressed its concern over human rights violations in Kashmir and offered its good offices for settlement of the dispute. The offer was refused by the Indian Government which continues to characterise the legitimate Kashmiri struggle for self-determination as Pakistan-sponsored terrorist activity.

Pakistan continued to highlight ongoing repression by the Indian military in Kashmir, and in 1991 the OIC proposed a fact-finding mission to the region. The Indian Government refused access to OIC members on the basis that their mandate did not extend to Indian territory. Visiting Pakistan-held Kashmir, the mission interviewed large

numbers of Kashmiris who had fled Indian atrocities and were living in makeshift refugee camps across the border. Using press reports and information collected by non-governmental human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, the mission compiled a report which was presented to the Twenty-first Conference of Foreign Ministers (Karachi, 1993). The report included evidence of consistent killings in custody, assaults on women, and torture and mutilation as means of subjugating the population. The Secretary General submitted his report to the Conference of Foreign Ministers recommending that Muslim states review their trade ties with India, that Indian labourers be prevented from working in the Gulf states, that the Kashmir human rights issue be raised at all international fora, and that the Muslim world use its influence over India to cease human rights violations.

An extraordinary session of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, the seventh, was held in Islamabad in September 1994; it unanimously demanded an end to state repression in India-held Kashmir and established an OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir. The OIC Islamic Summit and Ministerial Conferences have reiterated complete support for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination and condemnation of continuing human rights violations by the Indian military, and called for the withdrawal of all Indian troops as part of a long-term solution in accordance with the UN resolutions.

Bringing a new dimension to the dispute, both Pakistan and India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. Since then, however, there have been confidence building measures agreed upon by both countries, but the reluctance of the Indian Government to tackle the dispute has been the main obstacle to a resolution.

The OIC continues to reiterate its previous resolutions on the Kashmir issue and has maintained efforts to persuade the parties to allow a fact-finding mission to the region and accept its good offices for settlement of the dispute. The importance of resolving this dispute amicably, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolution and the aspirations of the Kashmiris, has been underlined in various statements by the Secretary General during Summit and ministerial meetings.

The OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir established since 1994 meets on the sidelines of all OIC Summits and ministerial meetings, and invites the representatives of the Kashmiri people to bring to the attention of the international community their point of view, espe-

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

cially on the human rights of Kashmiri people. The OIC has supported the four-point plan of the former President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf for settlement of the dispute and has, on a number of occasions, called on the Indian Government to improve the human rights situation inside Kashmir. Any meaningful change in the Indian position will take place only when it grants the right of self-determination to the Kashmiri people and when its policies based on the use of state power against the people are reversed. The OIC's special envoy has visited Azad Jammu and Kashmir more than once, but his visit to occupied Kashmir is long overdue. He is awaiting permission from the Indian Government to visit this territory.

Iraq

The OIC's engagement in Iraq has been multi-faceted. It was one of the first organisations to seek to establish permanent contact with the Iraqi authority in Baghdad through visits, through appointment of an ambassador to Iraq, and by helping to curb the sectarian and religious fighting. Since the beginning of the occupation of Iraq by American and other foreign forces, the OIC has endorsed all proposals aimed at transferring the sovereignty of Iraq to its people. It supported the establishment of a broad-based government based on the constitution which was accepted by the various factions of the Iraqi people. The OIC also urged the need for the Government of Iraq and its people to control their national resources, and for reconstruction of state institutions and the national economy.

On 8 June 2004, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1546⁵ which restored the Iraqi sovereignty to the people of Iraq and endorsed the timetable for the establishment of a permanent constitutional government by 31 December 2005 and the holding of elections for the Transitional National Assembly by 31 January 2005. The tumultuous and confusing internal political developments in Iraq in 2004 led to the holding of the 'Iraqi National Conference'. Participating in this National Conference were 1,100 religious, tribal and political leaders as well as 100 selected members of the Interim National Council and nineteen members of the Iraqi Governing Council.

On assuming the office of Secretary General, in January 2005, I had to factor the role of the OIC into the complex Iraqi situation, inter-

nally, regionally and internationally, as well as playing a prominent role in the meetings of the group of countries neighbouring Iraq.

The political developments culminating in the elections, the establishment of the parliament and the government and the symbolic restoration of Iraq's national sovereignty were all very encouraging signs indicating the return of normalcy. However, in 2005, the intensity of the sectarian strife and the acts of terrorism did not allow any respite for the people of Iraq. The holy shrines became prime targets, to induce vendettas among the Iraqi people. Thousands of people were killed in suicide attacks on the residential localities of both Shia and Sunni Muslims. All of a sudden, Iraq drifted to the brink of civil war between the religious groups and the first victims were unarmed and non-partisan civilians from both groups.

Later on, the OIC stepped up its approach, in talks with Westerners who had a direct interest in the developments in Iraq. The situation of Iraq was raised in the meetings with Jack Straw, the then Britain's Foreign Secretary, Javier Solana, the then High Representative of Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union, Condoleezza Rice, the former US Secretary of State, and, in January 2007, with Jacques Chirac, then French President. There have also been regular contacts with the Iraqi leadership since January 2005, including Iraq's President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The OIC's ministerial meetings from 2005 to 2008 adopted various resolutions on the situation in Iraq, and various documents of the OIC's efforts have been prepared since.

There was a major shift in the OIC's approach to Iraq when we decided to open an office in Baghdad after the return of an OIC fact-finding delegation that visited Baghdad in July 2006. First, it was the OIC's firmly held view that a Baghdad office would open direct channels of communication with all Iraqi stake-holders involved in the conflict. Second, the situation on the ground was to be monitored regularly and our efforts, in combination with those of other important players, would contribute to reducing the tension and help the parties involved to reach a political settlement.

In a bid to reach out to parties in the conflict, a political mission to Iraq was dispatched to hold direct consultations on all facets of the conflict. The deteriorating sectarian violence, which overshadowed other developments in Iraq, required that contacts with the religious leaders of various sects and traditions should be established and that

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

they should be persuaded to bridge the chasm of religious differences that contributed to the conflagration of sectarianism. Following the mayhem in Samarra city, during which two holy shrines were destroyed, the OIC Mission held various meetings in July 2006 to bring normalcy to the situation. In a meeting of the countries neighbouring Iraq held in Tehran, we proposed to hold a reconciliation meeting between the Sunni and Shia leaders in Mecca. The idea was welcomed by both parties. We also proposed that this reconciliation meeting should be held under the umbrella of the OIC Fiqh Academy.⁶

In October 2006, corresponding to the holy month of Ramadan, two groups of Iraqi religious scholarly authorities, Sunni and Shia, arrived in Mecca to discuss reconciling their points of view on denouncing violence on the basis of religious belief. This meeting was preceded by intense deliberations and preparations by the groups' representative scholars. The scholarly authorities expounded various principles on which the edifice of Islamic principles of tolerance, diversity of belief and non-use of force in matters of religion have been established over the last fourteen centuries. In the light of various precepts of the Quran and *Sunnah*, they rejected the notion of killing among Muslims and agreed on the Quranic principle of the inviolability of the human soul, which proscribes such killing and promises a harsh punishment for the perpetrators of such acts in this world and the hereafter. They also arrived at a number of conclusions and adopted a Declaration in Mecca on 20 October 2006.⁷

The text of the Declaration, from a historical viewpoint, is perhaps the first of its kind. Never before had Sunni and Shia scholars and religious leaders courageously addressed this sensitive issue by outlining the concept of religious harmony among various sects. When the text of the Mecca Declaration was announced, the public attention of the Muslim world was directed towards Islam's holiest city, watching this historic event that aimed at putting an end to a bloody saga in the history of fighting among Muslims. Prominent Muslim leaders from Sunni or Shia tendencies issued statements hailing this event as epoch-making. Western officials were also quick to pronounce their utter satisfaction at this happy occasion.

In recent years, many Muslim countries have witnessed the surfacing of differences between the Sunni and Shia schools, leading to violence that has taken place as a result of the interference of politics in the religious realm. The universality of the message of Islam has been

viewed through the prism of each sect's set of beliefs. However, when analysing deeper issues of jurisprudence, one notices that the opinions of the learned scholars of the past were never intended to override the universal message of Islam. This message being that the Quran is the Supreme Code and it is supplemented by the *Sunnah* (traditions and sayings) of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace. Thus, when the Quran and *Sunnah* are explicit on one issue, how could any interpretation which creates schism in the Islamic *Ummah* be endorsed? This was exactly the purpose of the exercise carried out by the learned scholars to establish the supremacy of the Quran and *Sunnah* in matters of faith. It also underlined that the Muslim faith is based on certain sacrosanct principles; one cardinal and irrefutable principle is that the killing of a human being is a heinous crime in the eyes of God. It also declared that no Muslim can declare other Muslims infidels. Furthermore, Islam is unequivocal about the sanctity of places of worship.

The next step for the religious scholars was to assume responsibility for disseminating the principles enshrined in the Declaration and reaching out to the people of Iraq through their sermons, to reduce the tensions between the two traditions. They decided that wide publicity would be given to the Declaration and it would be spread through the media and the pulpit, to prevail on the sectarian groups to appreciate the message of Quran in its true spirit. We have witnessed, in the following years, a remarkable reduction of violence on sectarian grounds in Iraq. The building of bridges between the two factions has definitely contributed to a reduction in violence.

In February 2009, accompanied by a large delegation that included the various OIC economic and intellectual institutions, including the IDB, I paid a visit to Iraq to meet high officials and consider possibilities of contributing to the reconstruction and development programmes. We dispatched different missions to Iraq in this regard. The OIC is currently working with the Iraqi stakeholders to organise a second meeting for the leading religious authorities and scholars among Iraqi Shias and Sunnis, as a follow-up to the first meeting.

Somalia

The civil strife in Somalia, which began in 1991, has brought immeasurable misery to the Somali people. The ensuing human catastrophe,

THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE

in the shape of famine and drought, has compounded this misery and claimed the lives of over a million people. The international community is alarmed by the number of deaths and the lawlessness in the country. The situation of Somalia, a founding Member State of the OIC, has long been one of the issues at the top of the latter's agenda. Various Summits and CFMs made resolutions on this subject.

The concurrent intervention of the United Nations and the United States was the immediate reaction to the Somali crisis. When the United Nations took over fully fledged responsibility, in 1993, the peace process in Somalia again stalled because of internal political differences between various Somali factions. The OIC then became involved in the peace efforts and established a Contact Group. However, in the years that followed, the Contact Group became almost non-functional until it was revived in 2006 during the Thirty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Baku. The OIC decided to open an OIC resident office in Somalia, which, for various security reasons, has not been able to start functioning.

After Ethiopian forces entered Somalia in 2006, the Somali 'Islamic Courts Union' which had taken control was evicted and the Transitional Federal Government took over the control of the Somali capital, Mogadishu. The presence of foreign forces on Somali soil was the main hurdle in the resumption of the peace process.

The OIC participated in the negotiation process leading to the signing of Djibouti agreement of August 2008 between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), the expansion of the transitional parliament and the election of a new President. As an active member of the International Contact Group on Somalia, the OIC continued to participate in all its meetings and activities. The Brussels Donors Conference held in April 2009 was an opportunity for the OIC to demonstrate its concrete solidarity with Somalia; it pledged over \$210 million in various forms of assistance to Somalia.

With a new intensification of the conflict after these processes, the OIC responded by reactivating its role in the peace building efforts in Somalia. Its Contact Group on Somalia and the Executive Ministerial Committee discussed the situation in Somalia in many meetings. Several OIC delegations visited Somalia and Kenya and held consultations with other international actors active on the Somali problem. In addition to sending assessment teams to evaluate the humanitarian situa-

tion in Somalia, the OIC has been mobilising Member States, some of whom have responded positively, to extend all forms of financial economic and capacity building assistance to Somalia including security assistance and contribution of troops to AMISOM, the African Union Mission in Somalia.

The OIC is committed to sustaining and intensifying its engagement with Somalia until durable peace is returned to this Member State. Accordingly, plans are under way to open the OIC Office in Somalia in order to coordinate its assistance programme for the country.

In recent months, having received a fresh mandate from the Security Council, the UN Special Representative initiated a peace process. The OIC has been a facilitator in the negotiations. We have encouraged both the Transitional Federal Government and the opposition alliance, based in Asmara, to bridge their differences. We also fully endorsed the UN plan to replace the foreign forces with blue helmets.

The OIC's commitment to bring peace in Somalia is unwavering and, as mentioned, once the situation is normalised, the OIC will open an office in Mogadishu to undertake humanitarian and reconstruction activities with the support of Muslim countries and OIC institutions.

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND MINORITIES IN THE WORLD

Muslims live in all continents across the world. It is estimated that around 500 million Muslims, representing one-third of the Muslim *Ummah*, live outside the OIC Member States. Spread across the globe, some live in large and well-established indigenous communities in such places as India, the Russian Federation, and China. Others live as small communities dispersed in many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. More recently, a growing new community of Muslims has developed as a result of transnational labour movements and successive waves of migration, particularly to Europe and North America, since the Second World War. As the OIC aims to give voice to the *Ummah*, its Charter places a duty of care over those Muslim communities who reside in non-member states.

Guidelines for action

Since the OIC's establishment, issues relating to Muslim minorities in non-member states have been high on the OIC agenda. Many resolutions and decisions were adopted with a view to providing assistance to minorities whenever it is needed, to enable them to enjoy their rights. The policy of the OIC on this issue is governed by the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned. Contacts with Muslim minorities are always carried out with the full knowledge and approval of the respective governments. The OIC's

goal is to work for the peaceful settlement of disputes so as to enable the minorities to exercise their legitimate rights and to develop their communities and their countries.

To achieve these goals, the OIC uses several ways and means that include goodwill missions to and from the countries concerned, mediation in certain conflicts, participating in negotiations between governments and minority representatives, and assisting in the development of programmes in various fields such as the economy, culture, training and education.

When I took office some five years ago, we were fully aware of the burden we had to shoulder in this area. It was apparent that OIC action in this domain would not be successful unless the basic and legitimate rights and needs of the minorities were met. Drawing on the legal instruments adopted by the international community to uphold human rights across the world, including the rights of minorities and religious freedoms, we have devoted a significant part of our time and effort, and made use of legal and material sources, to achieve progress for the benefit of Muslim communities worldwide.

To this end, we have invoked the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, which asserts the rights of minorities and forbids any distinction or discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth or other status. We have also made use of provisions contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, mainly Article 27, as well as the subsequent Resolution of the UN General Assembly No 47/135 of 18 December 1992, the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The scope of our work in this domain is not limited to providing moral or material support for these minorities to have their basic rights respected, but also involves helping them to have their Islamic identity and culture protected and preserved. Moreover, we have endeavoured to strengthen their relations with the OIC through regular contacts. For this purpose we have studied the possibility of Muslim minorities being allowed to join the OIC as Observers under the terms regulating that status. In this way we opened a window for the representatives of the Muslim minorities to be in close touch with the rest of the Muslim world, and to have the possibility of voicing their concerns and preoccupations directly to the Muslim world's highest authorities.

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Likewise, protection and safeguarding of the rights of Muslim minorities have been anchored in the new Charter of the OIC, to guarantee the permanent nature of this relationship. We also restructured the Department of Muslim Communities and Minorities in the OIC General Secretariat in order to streamline its work and render it more efficient. The Department's human resources were thus increased. We envisage opening a new research division under the Department to have more information and fuller knowledge of the conditions of these communities.

When we talk about a 'minority', we need to explain what we mean by this word. Minority in legal terms is a group of people who belong, by way of their nationality, to the state where they live but who are distinct from the rest of its population by their specific origin, language or religion—thus they are described as ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities. The challenges that arise relate to efforts, at the legal and political levels, to protect the said minorities against any abuse on the part of the dominant majority, and at the cultural level, to help them safeguard their specific traits in terms of ethnic origins, language and religion.

The policy of the OIC in dealing with this sensitive question is governed by a soft approach of strict non-intervention in the internal affairs of the countries hosting Muslim minorities, respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The goal of any contact is to ensure the enjoyment by the minorities of their basic rights as defined by international law, and in many cases amounts to playing the role of goodwill mission or mediator in certain conflicts arising between the minorities and their host countries or the rest of the population. The OIC considers the Muslim minorities as a cultural bridge between their host countries and the Muslim world. It endeavours to assist these minorities in economic, cultural and educational development programmes.

The freedoms and human rights enjoyed by Muslim minorities are measured in three categories. In the first category minorities have, on the one hand, relative enjoyment of rights and freedoms under their constitutions and other legal orders, but, on the other, suffer from an embedded practice of discrimination against them, hampering them from practicing their religion, protecting their cultural heritage, or having equal access to economic opportunities. A second category comprises cases of active limitation of the rights of Muslim minorities, by not allowing equal treatment for them and the majority, through some targeted policies of discrimination. In the third category there is

outright denial of all kinds of human rights, coupled with curtailment of economic and social rights. The countries in this category refuse any outside intervention, as in the case of Myanmar.

These criteria are not necessarily applied when assessing the situations of Muslim communities in Europe and America. The OIC deals with them separately, as their case is distinct in character from that of the communities and minorities in countries in Asia and Africa.

At present, the OIC's various ministerial and Summit meetings devote special attention to the questions of the Muslim Communities and Minorities in the Southern Philippines, in Western Thrace, in Myanmar, in the southern provinces of Thailand, in the People's Republic of China, and in India. The OIC's action conducted in each of these areas is outlined here, preceded by two earlier cases dealt with in the past decade: Bosnia, and the Muslim community of Bulgaria.

Some major problem cases

The Muslim Community in Bulgaria

At the end of 1984, the Bulgarian Government launched a campaign of assimilation against the Turkish Muslim community in Bulgaria, forcing 1.5 million of them to adopt Bulgarian-Christian names instead of their Turkish-Muslim ones. This campaign was followed by severe restrictions aimed at eliminating the ethnic, religious and cultural identity of the Turkish Muslim minority.

Attaching special significance to the matter, the OIC acted at different levels and took action that succeeded in relieving their plight. The Sixteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Fez in 1986, adopted a resolution on the issue, expressing its solidarity with the Turkish Muslim minority in Bulgaria and requesting the Secretary General to set up a three-member Contact Group to follow the question. The Secretary General accordingly entrusted three prominent Muslim figures (Dr Abdullah Omer Naseef from Saudi Arabia as Chairman, Justice Saiduzzaman Seiddiqui from Pakistan, and Ambassador Dr Omar Jah from The Gambia) to follow the situation of the Turkish Muslim minority in Bulgaria and to make recommendations. The Committee also included two members from the General Secretariat, Ambassador Ahmad Tayyeb and Mr Moncif Klibi.

The Contact Group visited Turkey in May 1986 but was unable to visit Bulgaria. However, after strenuous efforts, it managed to visit Bul-

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

garia in June 1987 and observed the hard conditions of the Turkish community and the oppressive policies and practices to which they were subjected. Accordingly, the Contact Group submitted its report to the Seventeenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Amman in 1988, on the scope of the assimilation efforts to which this community was subjected. The report noted that Muslims in Bulgaria were forced by official pressure and coercion to change their Islamic names into Bulgarian ones, which had the effect of destroying their Islamic identity, and had been denied several religious and cultural rights including the right to have free use of their mosques. The Contact Group made several recommendations including one calling for all OIC Member States and especially those who had close relations with Sofia to use their good offices to solve the plight of the Muslim community in Bulgaria; it recommended that those OIC Member States which had deep economic relations with Bulgaria might notify the authorities there that continued persecution of the Muslim minority and denial of its religious rights might affect such relations. The report also recommended that other kinds of pressure might be used, including raising the issue before appropriate international fora and agencies to bring constant pressure on Bulgaria to stop the process of forcible assimilation of the Muslim community. It suggested that the OIC Secretary General should visit Bulgaria and take up the matter with the authorities.¹

The period between May and November 1989 witnessed dramatic developments on this issue when the Bulgarian authorities intensified their repressive practices and deported 310,000 Muslims to Turkey. After his visit to Turkey to inspect the conditions of Muslim Turks deported from Bulgaria, the OIC Secretary General, Dr Hamid Algabid, sent a message to the Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States in which he highlighted the unjust campaign waged by the Bulgarian Government against Muslims in Bulgaria and invited Member States to exert the necessary efforts to relieve the Turks' plight.

The OIC's diplomatic pressure on Bulgaria was mounting at different levels. For example, at the request of Turkey, the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on the Plight of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria was held at the UN Headquarters in New York, in October 1989. The meeting called upon the Bulgarian Government to honour its international obligations and restore and respect the religious, ethnic and cultural rights of Turkish and other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria.

The Chairmanship of the Fifth Islamic Summit (Kuwait, 1987) and the General Secretariat worked in close coordination to exert consolidated pressure from the Muslim world on the Bulgarian government. The OIC Secretary General, accompanied by the Kuwaiti Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, visited Turkey and Bulgaria and delivered to their Heads of State personal messages from the Emir of Kuwait on the matter. The Emir followed up his mission and used his good offices by personally visiting the two countries. The initiative of Kuwait resulted in four meetings between Turkish and Bulgarian officials in Kuwait and Ankara between October 1989 and March 1990.

By that time Eastern Europe had been witnessing rapid developments since 1989 which brought new regimes to power, ready to recognise liberty, democracy and respect for human rights. In November 1989, there was a change in the Government of Bulgaria. On 30 December 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria (which was in the process of losing power altogether) denounced the policy of oppression waged against the Muslim Turkish minority by the former Zhivkov Government, describing this policy as a grave political error, deplored the former policies which restricted the freedom to choose one's own name, freedom of religion, and freedom to speak one's own language and practice one's own customs. It decided to implement the Bulgarian constitution's provisions on the rights of minorities to use their own languages, names and customs. On 13 January 1990, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted a decision approving the right of Muslim Bulgarians and Muslims of Turkish origin to choose new Islamic names or re-adopt their former Islamic names, and to build mosques and Quranic schools.

It can be safely said that the OIC-coordinated efforts had positive outcomes. The Bulgarian Government expressed its readiness to cooperate with the OIC and invited the OIC Contact Group to pay another visit to assess the new developments in the conditions of the Muslim minority in the country. Equally important, the positive position of the Bulgarian Government was met with appreciation by the OIC. In 1991, for example, the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers expressed its appreciation for the decisions taken by the new Bulgarian Government to improve the conditions of the Turkish Muslim community and noted that the new political forces which came to power in Bulgaria showed a relatively conciliatory attitude towards the Turkish Muslim community, and the campaign of assimilation and

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

persecution started by the previous oppressive regime of Zhivkov against the Turkish Muslim community had to a great extent ended. It also took note ‘with satisfaction of the normalisation in the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria, and expressed the hope that the dialogue between the two countries [would] help solve the outstanding problems concerning the Turkish Muslim minority in Bulgaria.’²

The Muslims in the Southern Philippines

Over many long decades, disturbance and conflict in the southern region of the Philippines have always been a source of preoccupation to the OIC and the Muslim world in general. The populations of the regions of Mindanao, Basilan, Solo, Tawi, and Balwan became Muslims and joined the worldwide Muslim community from the thirteenth century. The Spanish conquest of the Philippines in the sixteenth century failed to pacify the Muslim populations of the southern regions, and Spain was not able to impose its sovereignty over them. When Spain relinquished its rule over the Philippines in favour of the USA in 1898, after its defeat by that country, the region of Mindanao was included in the transfer of authority, and when the US granted independence to the Philippines in 1946 the region of Mindanao was also included in the deal. Since then, the region has witnessed a situation of insurrection and rebellion amid calls for self-determination and independence. By 1970, these disturbances turned into an outright armed conflict under the leadership of Nur Misuari, the leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The OIC was called upon from the early days of its establishment to address this situation in the southern Philippines. Responding to a request by the Government of Kuwait in 1972, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers decided to dispatch a fact-finding mission to the Philippines to study the situation and report back to the ministerial meeting. A committee was established for that purpose, and when the next Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur in 1974, an appeal was issued by the ministers calling upon the Government of the Philippines and the MNLF to engage in negotiations towards a peaceful solution to the crisis, within the framework of the sovereignty of the Philippines and its territorial integrity.

In September 1976, an agreement was signed in Tripoli by the two parties, under which the Muslims of the southern Philippines in thir-

teen provinces and nine cities would be granted autonomous self-rule. However, the differences between the two parties over the interpretation of this agreement prevented its implementation. After lengthy and arduous negotiations, the Government of the Philippines and the MNLF made another agreement on the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, under the auspices of the OIC, in 1996; Misuari was appointed as the Governor of the autonomous self-rule region. But the failure of the parliament of the Philippines to ratify this agreement created new obstacles, which blocked its implementation. The Philippine Parliament insisted that this agreement was not an international one, because it dealt with an internal issue, and therefore it did not need any ratification and could be implemented by an internal law. The Parliament therefore enacted a law, the Republican Act No. 9054, in August 2001 to implement the Peace Agreement which was opposed by MNLF, one of its main signatories. But this law again created many obstacles and complications which prevented the restoration of peace and security in the Philippines. The dispute over the area of the Autonomous Region led to a new wave of fighting. Misuari was subsequently arrested and accused of raising arms against the state.

Since my assumption of office as the Secretary General, keen attention has been devoted to the unfinished southern Philippines business. In 2005, the Third OIC Extraordinary Summit at Mecca adopted specific guidelines for dealing with Muslim minorities and communities in its Ten-Year Programme of Action. The decisions strengthened the OIC's determination and resolve to address the minorities' issues in earnest. A seasoned Egyptian diplomat, Ambassador Sayed Kassem Al-Masry, was appointed as special envoy on the question of the southern Philippines, with a mandate to open channels of communication with the respective parties. Contacts with the Government of the Philippines were established with a view to bringing the peace process back on track. The Government of the Philippines reacted favourably to the offer of good offices and accepted the fact-finding mission.

In response to the interventions and appeals by the OIC Secretary General, the Philippines Government agreed to move Misuari from prison to hospital and later to a more comfortable detention house. A fact-finding mission was dispatched in May 2006, headed by the special envoy, and was joined by the ambassadors of the OIC who were members of the Committee of Eight established to address the situation of the southern Philippines. The Mission met members of the

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Philippine parliament and civil society organisations. It undertook a visit to Sulu Island, where conflict between the Government and MNLF fighters continued. After negotiations between the two parties, an agreement was reached to suspend the military operations there. Having obtained that agreement, the Mission called on the President of the Philippines, Mrs Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. At the end of the meeting, a joint press communiqué was issued indicating that a tripartite meeting of the Government of the Philippines, the MNLF and the OIC would be held to review the implementation of the 1996 agreement in the near future. The communiqué also stipulated that the suspension of hostilities would be expanded beyond Sulu to cover the entire Mindanao region. As for the case against Nur Misuari, the OIC said the settlement of this legal case should be expedited because his release and participation in the tripartite negotiations were essential to the success of the tripartite meeting.

We were, finally, able to hold the first tripartite meeting in Jeddah from 10 to 12 November 2007, with the aim of overcoming the obstacles to full implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement. A major breakthrough was achieved with the establishment of five joint working groups with a mandate to find out the obstacles and make recommendations to move the implementation of the Peace Agreement forward. The five joint working groups had to discuss the issues of the Sharia and the judiciary, the political system and representation, education, natural resources, and issues of economic development, as well as the issues of the special regional security forces and a unified command for the autonomous region in Mindanao.

The second tripartite meeting was convened in Istanbul on 14–16 February 2008. It discussed the reports of the joint working groups and instructed them to further examine the position of the two sides in order to arrive at a common position. The working groups met twice. The first meeting was held in Manila from 3–7 January 2008, and the second in the same city from 20–28 August 2008. It was decided that the working groups would present their joint reports to the next tripartite meeting, which was expected to be convened at ministerial level. A significant milestone achieved by the working groups since then is the review of the 2001 internal law No. 9054 (Republican Act No. 9054 of the Philippines) which provides a legal instrument for implementation of the Peace Agreement; amendments were proposed to some of its articles to overcome the difficulties facing implementation.

Nur Misuari was granted bail in April 2008 after my protracted diplomatic interventions where I emphasised the need for his participation and stressed his role in the settlement of the conflict. Misuari was thus able to attend the meeting of the Thirty-fifth OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Kampala on 18–20 June 2008.

The European Muslim Minority in Western Thrace, Greece

The Western Thrace region of Greece, mostly populated by Turkish Muslims, was part of the Ottoman Governorate of Edirne (Adriano-ple) from the fourteenth century until 1913. The region became independent and a short-lived provisional Government of Western Thrace was established in 1913, known as the Independent Government of Western Thrace (*Garbî Trakya Hükümet-i Müstakilesi*). The area was then handed over to Bulgaria under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest, but on 25 November 1919, under the Treaty of Neuilly signed between the Allies and Bulgaria, Western Thrace was left to the Allies, to be administered by the French Military Governor General Charpy on their behalf. Then, on 14 May 1920, Komotini (*Gümülcine*) was occupied by the Greek army. The Greeks officially took over Western Thrace from the Allies with the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres with the Ottoman Empire on 10 August 1920.

According to the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne that was signed on 24 July 1923, the Turks of Western Thrace were exempted from the agreed exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. Article 40 laid down that the full rights of Muslims in Western Thrace were guaranteed by the Greek Government. At the same time they received citizenship and minority rights, including individual and religious rights, whose application would be administered by the offices of muftis elected by the Muslims. Therefore, matters regarding the Muslim minority in Western Thrace are supposed be governed by the Treaty of Lausanne. But there have been regular complaints about non-implementation of the Treaty by Greece, culminating in the denial of that minority's rights.

Various OIC resolutions have taken note of the non-compliance of the Greek authorities with the provisions of the Treaty, and called for its implementation in letter and spirit. Some of the difficulties faced by the Turkish minority relate to denial of citizenship rights to the Turkish minority and exclusion from equality before the law. Another diffi-

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

culty, which stems from such policies, is the ‘unlawful’ interference in the affairs of the ‘Muslim Boards’ and the exclusion of the members of this minority from access to economic opportunities.

Another disturbing development is the effort by the Government to change the demographic composition of the Western Thrace population by building new settlements of immigrants in the area and through a new administrative demarcation of the region. This was designed to seriously reduce the representation of the Turkish minority in the national parliament. It is planned to change the system of electoral constituencies and replace it by imposing new conditions on independent candidates running for single constituency elections, requiring them to obtain 3 per cent of the vote nationwide in order to be elected. The Greek Supreme Court also delivered a controversial decision to ban one of the oldest non-governmental organisations, the Turkish Union of Xanthi (*Iskeçe*), because it bears the word ‘Turkish’. The case was referred to the European Court of Human Rights. Similarly, there are other cases where the authorities have denied non-governmental organisations the right to function and have refused their registration. The European Court ruled that the ban imposed on NGOs of the Turkish minority is discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin and ordered that it should be lifted.

Most activities of the Greek authorities circumvent the European Convention on Human Rights and are prejudicial to the basic rights and interests of the Turkish minority. OIC Summit and Ministerial Council meetings have always taken a consistent and principled position on the protection of the Turkish Muslim minority of Western Thrace. The Thirty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Islamabad, 2007) called on Greece to implement the three rulings issued by the European Court of Human Rights. The OIC closely watches developments in Western Thrace and has regular contact with the minority’s NGOs as well as with the elected Muftis. During the official visit of the Mufti of Komotini and Xanthi to the General Secretariat of the OIC from 5–20 November 2007, in response to my official invitation, the Mufti and representatives of the NGOs of Western Thrace gave an extensive account of the difficulties Muslims are facing in their daily lives.

The Islamabad Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers also called on Greece to reinstate the citizenship rights of tens of thousands of members of the Turkish minority, honour the provisions of the Treaty

of Lausanne and recognise the elected Muftis in accordance with the stipulations of the Treaty and stop violating the provisions of the Treaty by unlawfully appointing ‘official’ Muftis. It also called upon Greece to abolish all discriminatory laws, reverse the practices of selectivity, provide equal opportunity to the population in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty and international and European human rights standards, and respect and recognise the distinct identity of the Muslims of Western Thrace.

The Muslim Minority in Myanmar

Myanmar consists of many minority ethnic groups besides the majority. These minority groups amount to 40 per cent of the population. The Myanmar authorities have been carrying out a campaign of suppression against these groups that is tantamount to genocide or crimes against humanity, particularly against the Rohingya Muslim population in Arakan (known as Rakhine today). The condition of Arakan Muslims in Myanmar poses a serious challenge to the international community as well as to the OIC. Over two million Muslims of Arakan, fearing ethnic cleansing, have fled the country and scattered as refugees in the neighbouring countries.

Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are denied citizenship by the Burmese authorities and are barred from exercising the right of return to their homeland. Several resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly have already acknowledged these grave violations of human rights and called on the authorities to provide respite to the Burmese population, including the Muslims who constitute a majority in the Arakan region. OIC Summits and ministerial meetings have called on Member States to help the Muslims of Myanmar and appealed to the Burmese authorities to put an end to its illegal practices of displacing and exiling the Muslims of Arakan and eradicating their Islamic culture and identity. The Thirty-fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Kampala, 2008) exhorted the Member States to continue their efforts in conjunction with those of the international community to ensure the return of all refugees of the Arakan region to their homes. It also called on the Burmese Government to allow an OIC fact-finding mission to visit Myanmar to study the conditions of the Muslims, but the government did not respond to this request. The OIC Member States are gravely concerned over this issue. They hope

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

that the authorities will allow the OIC fact-finding mission to visit the country. The human rights situation in Myanmar is a major preoccupation of the international community and pressure on the authorities should continue to reverse these illegal policies.

The Muslims in Southern Thailand

This question goes back to 1902 when four southern provinces, with a Muslim-majority population of approximately three million Malays, were annexed by the Kingdom of Thailand. There are other Muslims in other parts of Thailand, but their historical experience and ethnic origin are different. For over a century, the southern areas have been plagued by turmoil and instability, a situation that continues to characterise the region to this day.

Muslims in southern Thailand need peace, justice and development. Their demands revolve around the establishment of an autonomous government within the framework of the territorial integrity of Thailand, the recognition of their language and culture, and the right to establish religious courts and gain control over their economic resources for the benefit of their local development. In order to ensure the implementation of any agreement with the government, they demand that any agreement should be ratified by the Council of Ministers and the Parliament of Thailand.

The OIC continues to contribute positively to the ongoing efforts to find an appropriate solution to this question, and we continue to work with all concerned parties—the Government of Thailand, Muslim leaders in Southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and other states—in full transparency to work out a plan to solve the existing problems through dialogue and achieve peace, security and stability.

The experience of long years of dispute in Southern Thailand has shown that taking stringent security measures as a means of solving the problems there has been fruitless. The only alternative is to opt for a peaceful resolution through preliminary peace negotiations to ease the tensions, build confidence among the two parties, and reduce the security measures applied, with abolition of the emergency law in force in the region.

Our vision is based on the importance of effective involvement to reach a peaceful solution as the only way out of the problem for Muslims in Southern Thailand. In order to convince both parties, particularly

Muslim leaders in the region, it is necessary to know what makes Muslims resort to resistance, to identify the Thai Government's concerns about Muslims' demands and find out the reasons behind the authorities' failure to meet their demand for local self-rule in their region.

The continuation of military action by the Government as the only way to deal with the situation does not ultimately serve the supreme interests of Muslims in Southern Thailand or the people of Thailand as a whole. On the contrary, it is detrimental to their development and education and would lead to a decrease in the number of Muslims there. But it is necessary to address the concerns of the Government over the Muslims' demands, as they stem from the belief that Muslims seek to separate the south region of strategic importance from the rest of Thailand. The political will to find a solution that meets the Muslims' demands is still missing. The stalemate is consolidated by the constant changes of government in Thailand and the existence of a civil leadership in government institutions that does not see any other solution but the use of force to the problems in the south.

It is quite apparent that confidence-building and the dissipation of existing fears among both parties require intensive action and the dispatching of missions to the region, in order to gather as much information as possible and to convince the two parties of the imperative need to reach an agreed settlement. To this end, we are working with the Government of Thailand on creating positive conditions, opening up communication channels, and establishing permanent dialogue among the parties, with the OIC a fundamental participant in the dialogue. We are also coordinating efforts with neighbouring states, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, to support the initiatives likely to pave the way for a final resolution of the dispute, and we are making use of the capabilities of the Member States and Muslim NGOs, intellectuals and investors in order to establish communication and urge both parties to find a lasting peaceful solution.

Reaching a peaceful solution requires that we keep up permanent contact with the Government of Thailand at the highest levels. This is because the OIC is the only international body suitable for conducting dialogue between the two parties and developing relations with the Government of Thailand, which is an observer member at the Organisation. I paid the first ever official visit of an OIC Secretary General to the Kingdom of Thailand on 1 May 2007. During the visit, I expressed our concern over the situation in the southern border provinces where

PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

the climate of violence continued and the safety of innocent people was compromised. I called upon the authorities to further build up the trust and confidence of the local population and allay any concern among them over issues of impunity and injustice. I also solicited prompt and effective investigation of allegations of human rights abuses. I expressed the position of the OIC that the long-term solution should lead to granting the people of the region greater responsibility in managing effectively their local affairs, within the framework of the Thai constitution.

I was pleased to hear the assurances of the Thai Government that resolving the unrest in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces remains a top national agenda item and a priority of the Government. I also welcomed the Government's commitment to address the root causes of the problem through a comprehensive approach based on reconciliation and accommodation. The Thai representatives emphasised the importance of this comprehensive approach in improving the overall quality of life by strengthening the judicial system, encouraging people's participation in local administration, promoting economic, social and educational development, and respecting identity, culture and religion. The Thai side and the OIC reiterated their readiness to expand their constructive cooperation so as to enable the people of the Southern Border Provinces to assume the responsibility for their domestic affairs through a decentralisation process allowing the people to preserve their own cultural and linguistic specificity and manage their natural resources, in full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand.

When we raised the question of the disproportionate use of force and military actions taken against the Muslim populations in 2004, the then Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont offered his apologies for the mistakes committed against Muslims by the previous governments. The Thai side assured the OIC delegation of their determination to carry out a thorough investigation of all cases and outlined the measures taken to provide assistance to the families of those affected by the 2004 Krue Se and Tak Bai³ incidents. The charges against the detained Muslims were dropped at our request. Both sides reiterated that judicial process based on the rule of law, evidence and transparency is of the utmost importance to create an environment of trust, justice, peace and security, to ensure that no climate of impunity exists. Both sides also reiterated their grave concern over the massive loss of lives among

Thai citizens, whether Muslims, Buddhists or adherents of other faiths, and denounced all acts that lead to indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians. The OIC delegation confirmed its readiness to help and positively contribute to the success of the peace process, and the Thai side welcomed the offer. Currently, contacts are underway for implementation of this plan.

Muslim Communities in the People's Republic of China

For many years, the OIC has been monitoring the situation of Muslims living in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (historically known as Eastern Turkistan) located on the western confines of China. It has voiced its concerns over the denial of their cultural identity, social and religious rights, including the right to perform pilgrimage. The OIC will continue monitoring the situation of Muslims in China as it is a matter of concern to the Member States and to the Muslim world's public opinion. This affects cordial relations and the common interests that exist between the Muslim world and the People's Republic of China.

The number of Muslims in China exceeds 23 million according to Chinese reports which have not been updated for many decades. Some other sources claim that Muslims of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region number around 20 million. The Muslims of that region are feeling deeply indignant about their situation, especially in view of existing fears that they may be turned into a minority in their own homeland with growing numbers of non-Muslim Chinese settling in. In light of this precarious situation, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted recommendations calling on the Chinese Government to reconsider any policies or practices that are likely to alter the demographic structure in Xinjiang. The UN has also urged the Chinese authorities to remove any restraints on the exercise of religious rights by members of the minorities.

In this connection, in the report of the Secretary General to the Thirty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Baku, 2006) I appealed to the Chinese authorities to respond positively to the relevant recommendations of international organisations, put an end to the campaigns aimed at intimidating the Muslim population, release detained religious leaders and other political prisoners, and guarantee and safeguard the cultural and religious identity of Muslims.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

Tolerance is one of the pillars of human civilisation. Most of the religions and enlightened movements have struggled to uphold it and present-day democracies have embraced it. Compassion, and understanding and respect for others' right to differ in religious and cultural beliefs, values and practices, are among the basic tenets of tolerance that are crucial for peaceful co-existence in today's civilised society. Tolerance has always been fragile and has been threatened by intolerance throughout history. Time and again, bigotry has emerged in the forms of xenophobia, racism, religious and cultural hatred that resulted in wars and violence, taking a heavy toll on human lives and endangering peace and security.

Today, the world is once again threatened by the mounting trend of intolerance and irrational hatred that some people have against Islam, a religion rightly considered as an integral part of the Abrahamic tradition. This poses a looming danger to the social and cultural harmony and coexistence of civilisations. This is not to say that the adherents of Islam are incapable of allowing scrutiny of their faith, far from it. The religion and followers of Islam have encountered challenges and even attacks from the very moment the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, first brought the message of Islam to the people of Arabia.

However, one of the most formidable challenges of today's civilised world is the emergence of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims in the West. Some individuals and groups in the West are

actively involved in defaming Islam, perpetuating negative stereotypes and profiling Muslims while wilfully ignoring the professed Islamic principles of tolerance, compassion and peace. Seen in a wider context, the incendiary and inflammatory remarks and denigratory publications against the sacred symbols of Islam, including the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad and the disparaging of the Holy Quran and Islamic teachings, and the mass killings of Muslims in the Balkans during the 1992–95 war in Bosnia, are among the instances of incitement and intolerance against Muslims. In sum, it is seen as a holistic attack on Muslims, beginning with a campaign to besmirch their dignity and their right to be treated with equal respect, and culminating in violence where the now vilified Muslims are seen as fair game.

The former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, summed up this fear when he stated in New York on 7 December 2004, ‘Today, the weight of history and the fallout of recent developments have left many Muslims around the world aggrieved and misunderstood, concerned about the erosion of their rights and even fearing of their physical safety.’ He added: ‘Stereotypes also depict Muslims as opposed to the West, despite a history not only of conflict but also of cooperation and of influencing and enriching each other’s art and science. European civilisation would not have advanced to the extent it did had Christian scholars not benefited from the learning and literature of Islam in the Middle Ages and later.’¹

The phenomenon of Islamophobia has gained wide acceptance and momentum because of its wide dissemination through media outlets. In today’s globalised world, where peaceful and harmonious coexistence among religions and cultures is not only an option but a lynchpin for civilisations to survive and endure, the advocates of Islamophobia try to create divisions between the West and the Muslim world and thus drive the world towards the brink of hostility and instability.

Perceptions of Islamophobia

The term Islamophobia, which suggests an irrational fear or dislike of Islam, in no way reflects the reality and the gravity of the phenomenon. However, it has unfortunately found its place in common and diplomatic parlance.

Joycelyne Cesari of Harvard University, in the introduction to a report on ‘Securitization and Religious Divides in Europe’,² mentions

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

that although the term Islamophobia first appeared in an essay by the Orientalist Etienne Dinet in *L'Orient vu de l'Occident* (1922), it was only in the 1990s that the term became common. Cesari's report mentions, *inter alia*, that the term has been used increasingly in political circles and the media and even among Muslim organisations, especially after a report in 1997 by the British think-tank, the Runnymede Trust which institutionalised the term Islamophobia to mean prejudice against Muslims.³

The study shows that Islamophobia goes far beyond the fear factor and incorporates intolerance, hatred and discrimination against Muslims based on their race and religion. In his report to the Sixth Session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance defined Islamophobia as baseless hostility and fear directed at Islam and, resulting from this, a fear of and aversion towards all or most Muslims. He added that Islamophobia refers to the practical consequences of this hostility in terms of discrimination, prejudices and unequal treatment of which Muslims are victims.⁴

Background and prospects of historical reconciliation

Considering that Islam is not an exclusive or novel religion, that it occupies a salient position in the history of human civilisation and confirms previous heavenly scriptures, many Muslims find it difficult to understand the demonisation of Islam by some circles in the West. Islam had a long history and strong doctrinal base for recognition of and peaceful coexistence with other religions. It can be argued that 'the distinctive character of Islamic socio-political and socio-economic equestrianism is a result of its premise that every human being is on the same ontological sphere as every other and therefore does not have any privilege except for the fulfilment of his divine responsibility'⁵ and 'The Jews and Christians were [acknowledged] as *ahl al-kitab* [people of the book]; yet the members of some other religions such as Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, the Gnostics of Harran and pagan Berbers of North Africa were considered as protected minorities after the Islamic expansion.'⁶

Historical evidence proves that Muslims were never aliens in Europe. Indigenous Muslims are a principal demographic, intellectual and cultural component of Europe dating back to the eighth century. The

eight hundred years of Muslim presence in Spain enriched Western civilisation and made vital contributions in many fields of science, philosophy and arts. A similar presence continued in southeast Europe from the fourteenth century until today. Nowadays, demographically, many Muslims in Europe, such as the Albanians, Bosnians, Pomaks, Torbeshs, and Muslim Roma (Gypsies), are actually indigenous Europeans, while Turks have been living in Europe for more than seven centuries. Considering the geographical dimension and demographic reality, we find that Europe's boundaries from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century include parts of the Muslim world, particularly in Europe's southern and eastern regions.

Looking back at the emergence of Islamophobia in Europe, one realises that its existence also goes back a long time. It would be understandable to anchor the phenomenon to recent times when a handful of misguided Muslims were responsible for the tragic events of 11 September 2001. But the phenomenon predates these crimes by a long time. An anti-Islam mindset took root in the West with the portrayal of Islam as a danger to Christianity and, later, to Western values. The OIC has consistently argued that one of the reasons for the West to take a negative view of Islam was the conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Middle Ages.

The provocative attitudes against Islam in the West go beyond thoughts and opinions and involve effective discrimination, itself a grave violation of human rights. Such attitudes have resulted, in the very recent past, in extreme acts such as gruesome mass killings, genocide and torture of Muslims by Serb fanatics in the Balkans and particularly across Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. After the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, Serb religious militias started a systematic campaign to destroy Bosnia's Islamic heritage. The famous Aladza Mosque, built in 1551, was bombed and a bus parking lot was built in its place. National libraries, cultural institutions and monuments were destroyed. The state-run prison and Partisan sports hall and other sites were transformed into rape centres where Muslim women and girls were held and raped for days and weeks. In a historic trial that took place later, three Serb militia leaders were prosecuted and convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, on many counts including rape as a war crime and crimes of sexual and physical abuse.⁷

The International Committee of the Red Cross lists 7,079 dead and missing in Srebrenica. According to other sources, including the US

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

Embassy in Sarajevo, the figures range between 8,000 and 10,000. These all happened in the presence of a Dutch contingent of UN peace-keepers who failed to intervene, choosing instead to watch in complete silence. David Rohde, a Pulitzer Prize winner journalist of the *Christian Science Monitor*, states in his book:

The international community partially disarmed thousands of men, promised them they would be safeguarded then delivered them to their sworn enemies ... Mladic, apparently emboldened by the West's repeated failure to stand up to him militarily, mocked Dutch peacekeepers after the town fell, called them his prisoners and told Muslim negotiators 'Allah can't help you but Mladic can.'⁸

The spread of Islamophobia was not limited to the Balkans, but has gradually extended to other parts of Europe. The first decade of this century has witnessed a further decline in relations between the West and the Muslim world. They have been impaired following the actions of misguided extremists who were responsible for the tragic terrorist attacks in New York and Washington (2001), Madrid (2004) and London (2005), together with the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in November 2004 and other heinous crimes. Regrettably the blame fell collectively on Muslims and the situation was exploited by the extremists on both sides to vilify the peaceful image of Islam.

At present, manifestations of Islamophobia are still rampant in the Western media, films, literature, cartoons and public and work places. It needs to be recalled that a large number of Muslim countries have also been targeted by terrorist attacks. The OIC and its Member States condemned these heinous acts in the strongest terms but the Western media completely ignored their position. The proliferation of Islamophobia has been fed by ignorance or insufficient knowledge of Islam, a deliberately skewed interpretation of Islamic teachings, and the abuse or misuse of freedom of expression by some vested interests in the West. It has also been aided by the lack of adequate legal instruments that could prevent these hate practices.

Dialogue and engagement are the cornerstone of the OIC's strategy to speak for and protect the rights of Muslims in the West. Muslim communities, as mentioned earlier, represent a bridge between the West and the Muslim world. Their well-being can also act as a measure of the relationship between these two worlds.

The OIC first began to tackle this issue when it argued for more dialogue between the Western and Muslim worlds. This was taken up by the then President of Iran, Seyed Mohamed Khatami, in his capacity

as the Chairman of the Eighth Islamic Summit (Tehran, 9–11 December 1997). In his inaugural address at the Summit, President Khatami, speaking of the priorities of the Muslim world, stated:

Living in peace and security can be realised only when one fully understands not only the culture and thinking but also the concerns as well as the ways and manners of others. Sophisticated understanding of the cultural and moral dimensions of other societies and nations entails establishment of dialogue with them. Our civil society is not a society where only Muslims are entitled to rights and are considered citizens. Rather, all individuals are entitled to rights, within the framework of the law and order. Defending such rights ranks among the important fundamental duties of the government... Through providing the necessary grounds for dialogue among civilisations and cultures, with the people of intellect taking a pivotal role, we should open the way towards a fundamental understanding which lies at the very foundation of genuine peace which is in turn based on the realisation of the rights of all nations, and thus render ineffective the grounds for the influence of negative propaganda in the public opinion.

The Tehran Declaration issued thereafter by the Summit affirmed that Islamic civilisation has always and throughout history been rooted in peaceful coexistence, cooperation, mutual understanding, and constructive dialogue with other civilisations, beliefs and ideologies. The Declaration also underlined the need to establish understanding between civilisations. In September 1998, President Khatami submitted to the UN General Assembly a proposal to initiate a global dialogue among civilisations. This initiative received immediate international acclaim and approval. The UN General Assembly, by its Resolution No. 53/22 dated 4 November 1998, declared the year 2001 as the 'Year of Dialogue among Civilisations'.

The current OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action reaffirms that dialogue among civilisations based on mutual respect, understanding and equality between peoples is a prerequisite for world peace and security, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In my interventions and speeches at various meetings and conferences, I strongly advocated that this issue would be best addressed through a historic reconciliation between Islam and Christianity, as had happened between Christianity and Judaism. We sincerely believe that such a reconciliation between these two great Abrahamic faiths through a dialogue undertaken in a spirit of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding would help root out animosities and lead to the beginning of a new era. Subscribing to the idea, Richard W. Bulliet in his 2004 book stated that

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

'The scriptural and doctrinal linkages between Judaism and Christianity are no closer than those between Judaism and Islam or between Christianity and Islam ...'⁹

I reiterated the same position in my address¹⁰ to a workshop sponsored by the OIC and held at Georgetown University in Washington in September 2007. I also submitted the same proposal to the Sixty-second Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2007, and in other interactions, including those with European leaders and the High Representative of the Alliance of Civilisations.

We believe that the rights of Muslims in the West should be protected. In this sense, the OIC asked the Western countries to ensure that Muslims are on an equal legal footing with the Jews, Sikhs and others. We made a specific proposal on the ways and means to launch a structured strategy of cooperation or a historical reconciliation. I subsequently conveyed this appeal to the Enlarged Bureau of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in October 2005.

Major Islamophobic incidents and OIC endeavours

The Danish Cartoons Crisis: Chronology

The publication on 30 September 2005 of twelve derogatory drawings of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* caused widespread consternation and hurt in the Muslim world and beyond. It was felt that there was a deliberate attempt to vilify Islam's most revered figure, with the aim of causing hurt and maligning Muslims.

The defenders of the caricatures cited human rights and the right to free expression to justify their actions. But many ordinary Muslims and even more non-Muslims argued that while freedom of expression was certainly paramount, it seemed that only Muslims were subjected to a freedom to offend. As I explore later in the book, liberty, especially the freedom of expression, should always be linked with responsibility and exercised within the boundaries of decency and without inciting others through hate speech.

What perturbed us most was that the incident took place in Denmark, a country that was known for its respect for the values of tolerance and human rights. Worse still was the Danish Government's

indifference and insensitivity to the hurt and outrage felt by Muslims, including the Muslim community of Denmark. Visualising the repercussions in the Muslim world, the OIC deemed it necessary to effectively sensitise the global community to the hurt and insult caused to Muslims and at the same time do its best to avert any negative consequences. Mindful of how this issue could give succour to extremists and inflame popular opinion, the OIC exerted pressure at all levels and through a range of channels to calm down Muslim sentiments and caution against violence.

At the same time, the newspaper in question rejected the request from ambassadors of the OIC Member States in Copenhagen for an apology. The Danish Prime Minister thereafter refused to meet the OIC ambassadors, stating that this matter was related to freedom of speech. The OIC on its part used all the means at its disposal to make it clear to the Danish authorities that their indifference was not a constructive approach towards the issue. On 15 October, I addressed letters to the then Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dmitrij Rupel in his capacity as Chairman of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis. In my letter to the Danish Prime Minister, I implored his Government to prevent further escalation of the tension by taking an unequivocal stance and the necessary measures.

To our regret, the OIC's constructive approach was not reciprocated by the Danish Government. The Danish Prime Minister's reply, dated 21 October 2005, to the joint letter addressed by the OIC ambassadors on 12 October fell short of realising the gravity of the hurt and refrained from taking any action with regard to the incident. The Muslim world perceived the Danish attitude as lacking ethical responsibility and empathy, and contrasted its response to the attitudes of other European countries when similar incidents occurred later on. Danish Muslims sent a complaint petition to the office of the Local Prosecutor in Viborg in Denmark on 27 October. The Danish Government did not treat the issue with the seriousness it merited; instead, it appeared to have taken the side of the offending newspaper. We had no doubt that this Danish newspaper publication changed the dynamics of the relations between the Muslim and Western worlds. The OIC Ambassadorial Group in Geneva held two expert level and three ambassadorial meetings to discuss the issue. Following this, the Chairman of the OIC

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

Group in Geneva forwarded a letter dated 10 November 2005 to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHRHC), the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religions.

Then, in November 2005, I raised the issue with OSCE officials in Vienna, and during my statement before the OSCE Permanent Council on 14 November, I was critical of the cool reaction of Danish authorities and the unacceptable justification given by the newspaper's editor-in-chief to Muslim communities and OIC Member States' ambassadors. Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in her reply letter dated 28 November 2005 to Masood Khan, Chairman of the OIC Group in Geneva, deplored any statement or act showing lack of respect towards other people's religion and instructed the relevant organs of the UNHRHC to investigate the matter. Accordingly the UN Rapporteur, Doudou Diène, officially asked the Danish authorities to respond to the question. Meanwhile, the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action mandated the OIC to devise plans to deal with this phenomenon. The Extraordinary Summit (7–8 December 2005), in its Final Communiqué, stated the following:

The conference underlined the need to collectively endeavour to reflect the noble Islamic values, counter Islamophobia, defamation of Islam and its values and desecration of Islamic holy sites, and to effectively coordinate with States as well as regional and international institutions and organisations to urge them to criminalise this phenomenon as a form of racism. The conference expressed its concern at rising hatred against Islam and Muslims and condemned the recent incident of desecration of the image of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the media of certain countries and stressed the responsibility of all governments to ensure full respect of all religions and religious symbols and the inapplicability of using the freedom of expression as a pretext to defame religions.

Upon receiving this mandate from the Mecca Summit, the OIC General Secretariat made combating Islamophobia and discrimination and intolerance against Muslims one of the important priorities of its activities.

After three months of silence, the European Commission commented on the controversial drawings. The EU's Justice Commissioner, Franco Frattini, described *Jyllands-Posten's* decision to publish the caricatures, at a time when animosity towards Islam continued to grow after the London bombings, as 'thoughtless and unwise' and warned

that they could incite xenophobia and further growing radicalisation throughout Europe.

In a parallel development, a resolution on Denmark's observance of the Convention on Minorities was passed by forty-six Foreign Ministers in the Council of Europe, which noted that 'a layer of intolerance in the Danish society both at the political level and in the media exists and the Danish integration policy may lead to a climate of hostility towards different ethnic and religious groups.' On 20 December, twenty-two former Danish ambassadors, including many who had served in Muslim countries, criticised the Danish Government over its handling of the crisis.

In my meeting with Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, in Cairo, on 27 December 2005, we decided that the two Organisations would follow the developments closely together in a concerted manner. Two days later, the Arab League Foreign Ministers criticised the Danish Government's reaction.

After the reactions of the OIC leaders at the Mecca Summit, the Danish Prime Minister devoted some space in his 2006 New Year Address to this issue, to defuse the international pressures and calm the feelings of the Muslim world. In his address, he stressed that the Danish Government condemned any expression, action or indication that attempted to demonise groups of people on the basis of their religion or ethnic background. He fell short of an apology but spoke of responsibility in exercising freedom of speech. This statement and its Arabic translation were officially distributed by Denmark in some Muslim countries.

In his letter dated 6 January 2006, the Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller informed us that the Danish Government took the Final Communiqué of the Extraordinary Islamic Summit as well as the Declaration of the Arab League very seriously. He repeated the content of the Prime Minister's statement.

Meanwhile, the complaint lodged against the Danish daily on behalf of eleven Muslim organisations in Denmark was rejected on 7 January by Viborg's Attorney General. He rejected the case, saying that the cartoons were not punishable under Danish laws. He stressed that his ruling was not political and took into consideration newspapers' right to free expression. Unfortunately, on 10 January, only three days after the verdict of the Local Prosecutor in Denmark, a conservative Christian magazine in Norway, *Magazinet*, published the same cartoons that

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

caused uproar in the Muslim world. The same day, another Norwegian newspaper, *Dagbladet*, published the caricatures on its website. The issue was taken up at the OIC Ambassadorial Executive Committee's Preparatory Meeting in Riyadh on 17 January 2006 as well as by the OIC ambassadorial groups at the UN in Geneva and UNESCO in Paris at their separate meetings on 18 January. The OIC Executive Committee Preparatory Meeting decided to take up the Islamophobia issue together with the recent developments at an ambassadorial plenary meeting in the coming weeks in Jeddah. The OIC-UNESCO Group, looking into negative impacts of the issue on cultural interactions and dialogue, decided to send letters to the Director-General of UNESCO and the Danish Permanent Representative to UNESCO.

On 18 January 2006, the OIC issued a statement denouncing and disapproving strongly the recurrence of the publication of blasphemous and insulting caricatures in the Norwegian newspaper *Magazinet* following their earlier appearance in the *Jyllands-Posten*. The statement said that Islamophobic acts, which are against internationally promoted common values, should not be condoned under the pretext of freedom of expression or the press. The Undersecretary of the Danish Foreign Ministry invited the eleven OIC Member States' ambassadors in Copenhagen to the Ministry. Referring to the Prime Minister's New Year address and the Danish Foreign Minister's letters to the Secretary General of the OIC, he informed the ambassadors that the Danish side hoped the tension was eliminated and the issue should be closed. The Danish Embassy in Riyadh issued a press release on 21 January 2006, repeating the views of the Danish Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Governments, parliaments, religious scholars and intellectuals in the OIC Member States condemned the publication and took actions at various levels. People across the Muslim world took to the streets to express their anguish and anger against the cartoons. The Danish Government communicated its official view to the United Nations regarding the issue, in a document prepared jointly by the Danish Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Integration. The Danish Prime Minister stated that neither Denmark nor the newspaper publishing these cartoons had done anything to be ashamed of.

On 25 January the Embassy of Norway in Riyadh, simultaneously with other Norwegian Embassies in the Middle East, issued a press statement on the publication of the drawings in the Norwegian maga-

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

zine *Magazinet*. The statement described the caricatures as offensive and the incident as unfortunate and deplorable. The same statement was made on 26 January 2006 at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna by the Norwegian Permanent Representative. Norway announced that it had advised its Middle East Embassies to voice regret at the Norwegian newspaper's reprinting of the cartoons.

On 27 January, Denmark's main industry organisation, the Confederation of Danish Industries, urged *Jyllands-Posten* to explain its decision to publish the caricatures. Imams, religious scholars and intellectuals across the Muslim world, including the Imams of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, denounced the Danish and Norwegian newspapers' acts, urged the Islamic countries to confront such hostile campaigns, and backed a popular boycott campaign already initiated by Muslims. Mass protests were staged all over the Muslim world.

On 28 January 2006, I sent a letter to the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs in reply to his letter of 6 January, emphasising that the Danish Government's stance and the arguments had fallen short of satisfying the expectations of the Muslims world, and on the contrary had exacerbated the disappointment and indignation felt by Muslims; I explained the reasons for the dissatisfaction. That same day, at a press conference in the OIC Headquarters, I expressed my deep disappointment over the lack of empathy by the Danish authorities and stressed that the response issued after procrastination of over three months was highly unsatisfactory and would be unable to answer expectations.

On 29 January, I announced in Cairo that the OIC would ask the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution to stem attacks on religious beliefs. On the same day the Arab League's Deputy Secretary General made a similar call.

On 30 January, the Austrian Foreign Minister as well as the EU High Representative stated that religious values should not be humiliated in the exercise of freedom of speech. Then the Danish Prime Minister, stressing that the Danish Government cannot influence what an independent newspaper chooses to publish, stated that he respected other people's faith and that he would personally never depict Prophet Muhammad, Jesus or any other person in a way that could insult other people. On the same day the former US President Bill Clinton, in his address to the Middle East Prosperity Conference in Doha, warned

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

against rising anti-Islamic prejudice, comparing it with historic anti-Semitism as he condemned the publishing of cartoons. He said, 'So now what are we going to do? ... Replace the anti-Semitic prejudice with anti-Islamic prejudice? ... In Europe, most of the struggles we have had in the past fifty years have been to fight prejudices against Jews, to fight against anti-Semitism.'

On 31 January, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* apologised in writing for having unintentionally offended many Muslims. However, the newspaper did not apologise for printing the caricatures. And on 1 February, various newspapers in France, Germany, Italy and Spain reprinted the cartoons on the pretext of solidarity with the Danish newspaper and in a purported defence of freedom of the press, defying Muslims' indignation and thus causing further escalation of the tensions.

On 2 February, outrage over the reprinting of the cartoons escalated in the Muslim world, with major protests. The editor of the French newspaper *France Soir* was sacked for printing the cartoons. The UN Secretary General stated that a free press must fully respect all religions. On 3 February, thousands of Muslims protested against the caricatures after the Friday prayers. The US State Department criticised the caricatures, calling them 'offensive to the beliefs of Muslims'. But some more European newspapers republished the twelve caricatures and printed editorials criticising European media for 'giving in to pressures'.

I received a letter from the Danish Foreign Minister as a reply to my letter of 28 January. He stated that *Jyllands-Posten* had issued an 'unequivocal' apology to the Muslim world and that this apology would contribute to the solution of the issue. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan urged Muslims to accept the apology of the Danish newspaper.

On 4 February, the Vatican in its declaration emphasised that the right to freedom of thought and expression could not imply the right to offend the religious sentiments of believers. That day, during the protests in front of Danish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus, damage was done to the premises of the Embassies and, to our regret, the next day some demonstrators set the Danish Embassy in Beirut on fire. To ease the tension and stop violence, I made several contacts asking for some urgent measures to be taken against these acts. The UN Secretary General urged an end to violence.

On 6 February, protests all over the Muslim world continued. Following the eruption of violent demonstrations in some countries, I

received separate telephone calls from the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the EU High Representative Javier Solana, and the Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos, all of whom sought my advice and assistance to calm down the streets. I conveyed to them the expectations of the Muslim world. Based on these contacts, and upon our initiative, a 'Trilateral Statement' was negotiated within almost forty-eight hours and issued simultaneously in New York, Jeddah and Brussels on 7 February as the Joint Statement of the UN and OIC Secretaries General and the EU High Representative. The statement, while condemning the violence, described the caricatures as 'insulting' and 'offensive', and emphasised that freedom of expression entails responsibility and discretion and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions. The statement affirmed that the anguish, deep hurt and indignation of the Muslims were understood and that there was an urgent need for renewed dialogue.

While the OIC Group in New York met and issued a statement condemning the caricatures, the then US President gave support to the Danish Government, while President Putin of Russia urged the Danish Government to apologise. On 8 February, the OIC Executive Committee representatives in New York met the UN Secretary General. Meanwhile the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* reprinted the cartoons along with other caricatures. The French President Jacques Chirac subsequently condemned decisions to reprint as 'overt provocation'.

On 9 February, I issued a call to the Muslim world and urged all Islamic organisations as well as Muslim leaders to work together for the adoption of legislation to protect the sanctity of religions and the Prophets. I also called for a large-scale awareness campaign to explain the facts about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. That day, the UN Secretary General spoke against reprinting controversial caricatures.

On 10 February, demonstrations continued in the OIC Member States as well as in non-member states. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair said he regretted the offence caused, but insisted nothing justified the violent backlash.

On 11 February, I briefed OIC Foreign Ministers on the efforts of the General Secretariat in this matter as well as the visit to made to the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah by Javier Solana, following the release of the tripartite joint statement by the UN, the OIC and the EU. As a result of these contacts, we issued a press statement stating that the OIC Member States expected the EU to identify Islamophobia as a

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

dangerous phenomenon and to observe and combat it in the same way as xenophobia and anti-Semitism were dealt with, by creating suitable observation mechanisms and revising legislation.

On 12 February, further to the telephone conversations on 2 and 10 February, I received a written message from the Iranian Foreign Minister, requesting an extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers or any other mechanism which might be deemed appropriate for consideration of the issue. I held further consultations on the telephone with the Foreign Minister of Yemen in his capacity as the Chair of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, and discussed the issue with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkey who separately visited the OIC headquarters.

On 13 February, Solana paid a visit to the OIC headquarters following our discussions and joint statement on 7 February 2006. In our joint press conference after the meeting, he emphasised our discussions on the renewal of dialogue and the building of bridges between the EU and the Muslim world and reaching out to our communities to make sure that people's hearts and minds were not hurt again. On behalf of the OIC, I made a five-point proposal, including the following:

1. Adoption of legal measures against Islamophobia through the European Parliament;
2. Joint OIC-EU action at the UN for the adoption of a resolution on combating defamation of religions;
3. Adoption of a code of ethics for the European media;
4. Adoption of an International Communication/Media Order by the UN defining freedom of speech with regard to religious symbols; and
5. To include operative provisions prohibiting blasphemy and defamation and incitement to hatred in the text of the resolution on the Statute of the Human Rights Council.

On his side, Mr Solana expressed his readiness to take the message and discuss it with the EU Member States. On 14 February 2006, following a decision of the OIC Ambassadorial Executive Committee Preparatory Meeting in Riyadh, an Extraordinary Meeting of the OIC Member States' Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the OIC was convened in Jeddah to examine the latest repercussions of the publication of offensive and defamatory cartoons in Danish and other

European newspapers. The representatives of the Member States voiced their regret that the Danish authorities' failure to react adequately to this issue, and called for an extraordinary meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers if the stalemate persisted. The representatives of the Member States unanimously approved the points presented to Mr Solana, as a way to defuse the crisis and prevent the recurrence of similar crisis in the future.

Mr Solana's visit was followed by the Dutch Foreign Minister's visit to the OIC headquarters on 15 February in which these five points were also submitted. On 21 February, a Joint Communiqué was released after my meetings with the Pakistani Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in Islamabad, condemning the publication of the caricatures and reiterating the expectations of the Muslim world.

To proceed to a new step based on the UN-OIC-EU Trilateral Statement, I attended a meeting on the sidelines of the Alliance of Civilisations High Level Meeting in Doha on 25 February. The UN Secretary General invited myself, the EU High Representative, the Arab League Secretary General and the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Qatar, Spain and Turkey to issue a joint statement on the crisis. Mr Solana and the Austrian Foreign Minister did not show up; the same day, Mr Solana telephoned me and explained that divisions among the EU members before the EU meeting to be held in Brussels on 27 February prevented his participation. I conveyed to him our disappointment over not getting any positive reactions from the EU side. The Doha Joint Statement was issued without the participation of the EU. The OIC was able to insert into the text important points to the effect that the participants as a group should follow up this statement and commit themselves to formulating a joint strategy and agreed measures to contribute to a process that would overcome the current crisis and to prevent its recurrence, and promote tolerance and mutual respect between all religions and communities, in Europe and elsewhere. In the Joint Statement the participants requested the UN Secretary General to bring this document to the attention of the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, and the EU.

The EU Ministerial Meeting of 27 February 2006 in Brussels fell short of meeting the expectations of the OIC; it neither addressed the real issue nor proposed any concrete action or mechanism. Instead it focused on condemnation of the violence and the responsibility of states to protect diplomatic missions.

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

On 8–10 March, I met the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and the British Prime Minister's Senior Foreign Policy Adviser, Nigel Sheinwald. A Joint Communiqué was issued after the meeting with Mr Straw, which among other things, referred to the ‘deep regret over the publication of insensitive and disrespectful cartoons in some European newspapers that had caused hurt and resentment all over the Muslim world’. I expressed my disappointment with the EU conclusions to the British side, at a widely covered press conference held in London on 10 March.

On 15 March, the Danish Prosecutor General dismissed the complaint by the Danish Muslims and decided not to bring charges against *Jyllands-Posten* for violating Danish blasphemy law. The ruling confirmed an earlier decision by a regional Danish prosecutor.

On 15 March 2006, the OIC Ministerial Executive Committee discussed the issue in Jeddah and issued a Joint Communiqué taking note of the Tripartite Statement of 7 February 2006. The meeting also endorsed the Doha Joint Statement issued on 25 February 2006. It agreed that the OIC Member States and the OIC Secretary General would continue to review and exert efforts at all levels in order to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) The adoption of a resolution against defamation of religions by the Sixty-first Session of the UN General Assembly,
- (b) The implementation of the Doha Statement,
- (c) The effective utilisation of both the EU-OIC Joint Forum and the Alliance of Civilisations,
- (d) The intensification of contacts with the international community, particularly European countries and international organisations, with a view to promoting the true values and real message of Islam.

On 9 May, the Permanent Secretary of State of the Danish Foreign Ministry briefed me in my office on various steps taken or proposed by his Government on several fronts to alleviate the negative effects of the publication of the cartoons. We stressed that past experiences of dialogue among civilisations or inter-faith dialogue had proven to be ineffective because they had been without specific targets and political will. I added that guarantees were needed to prevent recurrence of the events such as the publication of these incendiary cartoons.

Conclusion Regarding the 'Cartoon Crisis'

This crisis revealed the shortfalls in achieving the objectives of the dialogue we had been aiming for. The official Danish government stance ignored all the reactions from the Muslim world. A similar response came from the officials of the EU. High-level officials in Europe began to take interest in the issue only after the outrage of Muslim public opinion blatantly increased when the attack on the Prophet of Islam was repeated with the republication of the same caricatures elsewhere in Europe. The Western media also began to focus on the issue when some unfortunate violent acts followed the widespread peaceful demonstrations and public boycotts. Only then were contacts initiated between the OIC and EU and a number of other international actors. The overall European attitude towards the issue could be divided into (1) regret only for the reaction, not for the action; (2) clear condemnation and rejection of the offence; (3) a cautious show of respect for Muslim sentiments by avoiding the republication of the cartoons, as in the United Kingdom.

Against this background, one has to ask: if the long-standing dialogue between Islam and West was productive, why then was there such insensitivity for the feelings and beliefs of the Muslims, and why did the concerned authorities wait for the escalation of the crisis before acting?

The obvious answer is that existing dialogue mechanisms had failed. All those activities and contributions of the past appeared to be inadequate and wasted in the face of a firm challenge which tested the true meaning and purpose of dialogue. For anyone wishing to live in peace and security in our world, and to see this world offer a better future, an alternative must be conceived. In my opinion, the alternative to the previous attempts at dialogue should be one that sets clear goals and objectives and a defined agenda and process that would lead to those goals and objectives. This should be accompanied by honest political will.

The goal, as I would like to envisage, should be to reach a historic reconciliation between the West and Islam, and in practical terms between Christianity and Islam. I made calls for this in my addresses to European public opinion on more than one occasion. This reconciliation could not be achieved unless there was a political engagement between the parties having a stake in the dialogue process, and a commitment by the media to support it. Otherwise no project, initiative or

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

campaign for dialogue would be able to stand in the face of these trying challenges. Unless this new approach was favoured, the efforts would remain simply a series of meetings conducted under this theme, where the participants exchange points of view and then depart, leaving us unprepared to face any challenges the future may bring.

In the aftermath of the Danish cartoons crisis, a strong proactive and leading stance was taken by the OIC and led to the establishment of an OIC Islamophobia Observatory at the General Secretariat to monitor, report and respond to the acts of Islamophobia.

The Dutch Film *Fitna* and Reprints of the Cartoons

The incidence of Islamophobia, however, showed no signs of relenting. The most noticeable recent instances were the release of the film *Fitna* on 27 March 2008 by the Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders, the leader of the far-right Freedom Party, who compared the Holy Quran to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and called for it to be banned; and the republication of provocative and insulting caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad on 13 February 2008 by seventeen Danish newspapers, as a reaction to a supposed plot to assassinate the Danish artist author of the cartoons, an act that was not proved. Danish newspapers defended their action as a show of solidarity in the defence of freedom of expression.

The OIC's reaction to these two incidents was immediate. We made a strong statement denouncing the reprinting of the caricatures and called on the Danish Government to assume its moral responsibility. As OIC Secretary General, I raised the issue with the Danish Foreign Minister, and then there were discussions with the Danish Government. However, it was frustrating again to note that the Western High Court of Aarhus of Denmark ruled on 19 June 2008 that the publication of the blasphemous cartoons was legal, by linking it to Islam.

On the film *Fitna*, the OIC General Secretariat addressed a note of concern to the Dutch Embassy in Riyadh, requesting the Dutch Government to take immediate steps and measures to stop its release. We also conveyed our concerns about the film to the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands and urged him to take immediate preemptive steps to stop its release. The Dutch Government had openly expressed concern about the film's release and its possible offensive nature. In a public statement on 18 January 2008, the Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter

Balkenende stated that the 'broadcast of the film would invite heated reactions that could affect public order, public safety and security, [as well as] the economy'. The Dutch Foreign Minister assured that his Government acknowledged the OIC's preoccupation with seriousness and dissociated itself from the film. We addressed letters to several European leaders, including the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, the Foreign Minister of Slovenia which then held the EU Presidency, the Foreign Minister of Finland in his capacity as the then Chairman of the OSCE, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilisations, conveying the Muslim world's deep concerns and calling for their urgent intervention, and drawing attention to Article 20, Para 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, relevant to the case.

Upon the release of the film through the internet, the OIC issued two separate statements strongly condemning it and seeking the Dutch Government's intervention to use legal and judicial measures to enforce the relevant provision of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Parallel letters were addressed by the OIC to the UN Secretary General, the European Union, and other institutions requesting their intervention on the issue. The strong reaction of the international community against the film *Fitna* was a message that Islamophobia was no longer taken lightly. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon termed the film as 'offensively anti-Islamic'.¹¹ The EU Presidency stated that it will 'serve no purpose other than inflaming hatred'.¹² The Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis stated that it was 'a distasteful manipulation which exploited ignorance, prejudice, and fears'. In a separate statement before the Council's High-Level Human Rights Seminar, Terry Davis stated that:

... freedom of expression can be restricted in certain cases listed by the [European] Convention [of Human Rights] itself. In fact, the European Court of Human Rights has in the past upheld such restrictions in relation to an artistic creation, which was considered offensive to a religious faith. Perhaps it is relevant to add that the religion in question was not Islam. It was Christianity.¹³

Muslims were disappointed and frustrated by the decision of the Dutch Public Prosecutor's Office on 30 June 2008 to drop all charges against Wilders on the grounds that Wilders' film *Fitna* did not constitute any criminal offence under Dutch law. Although the Dutch and Danish Governments distanced themselves from the two incidents, the

OIC was frustrated to note that no action was taken against the perpetrators who could have been punished for their acts of incitement to hatred and discrimination.

The OIC approach

The insulting cartoons and the subsequent film were not the only incidents of Islamophobia. Similar incidents and attacks on Muslim places of worship and culture, as well as discrimination in various fields, were taking place in the West. The most tragic incident was the murder in July 2009 of a pregnant Muslim woman in a German courtroom by an assailant openly hostile to the victim's practice of her faith. It would be naive to believe that the proponents of Islamophobia are unaware of the implications of their provocative acts of incitement and intolerance on global society and the resultant division and mistrust between Muslim and Western societies. What was bewildering was that rather than being made accountable for inciting hatred and religious intolerance, the offenders were acquitted under the cover of exercising their 'right' to freedom of expression.

Islamophobic incidents, in the form of stereotyping of Islam through the mockery and denigration of its sacred symbols, and the subjection of Muslims to xenophobic and racial slurs and discrimination, have fuelled hostility against Muslims in the West as well as inflaming anti-Western feelings in the Muslim world. The use of unhelpful and loaded adjectives such as 'Islamic' extremists, 'Islamic' terrorists, and even lazily conceived terms such as Islamists, has created a distorted image of Islam.

To address Islamophobia, the OIC adopted a three-tier approach:

1. To closely monitor the campaign of hatred against Islam as well as discrimination against Muslims and take remedial action through diplomatic means;
2. To effectively raise global awareness about the negative repercussions of Islamophobia and the grave threat it poses to global peace and security; and
3. To make serious efforts to stem the growth of Islamophobia through adoption of adequate legal instruments that would make Islamophobes accountable for their actions. It was also felt that dealing with Islamophobia must not be limited to the educated elite but should also include ordinary people at grass-roots levels.

The establishment of the Observatory on Islamophobia at the OIC General Secretariat was one of the measures taken. The OIC Observatory submitted its first annual report on Islamophobia at the Eleventh Islamic Summit, held in Dakar on 13–14 March 2008. An updated annual report was subsequently submitted to the Thirty-fifth Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Kampala on 17–18 June 2008. The two reports recorded the manifestations of Islamophobia and highlighted credible studies and polls confirming the rising trend of Islamophobia in parts of the Western world. The instances quoted or referred to in the reports confirmed that marginal Western groups and individuals, motivated by hatred and intolerance against Muslims and Islam, persevered in acts of provocation and incitement of religious intolerance and discrimination by misusing or abusing the right to freedom of expression.

The concern over the rise of Islamophobia was voiced very strongly by the Heads of State and Governments and leaders of delegations at the Eleventh Summit. They were unanimous in their call to the international community for collective political action to address the phenomenon. The same call was reiterated by the Thirty-fifth Council of Foreign Ministers. Prior to these the Thirty-fourth Conference of Foreign Ministers (Islamabad, 2007) urged the OIC to foster close ties with the UN and other international organisations, such as the EU and the OSCE, at both bilateral and multilateral levels to combat Islamophobia and promote dialogue. There was also a host of other initiatives and activities undertaken by the OIC in the Member States and at all levels to draw attention to discrimination and intolerance towards Islam and Muslims. Among them were: a workshop on Islamophobia (organised at IRCICA, Istanbul, 2 February 2007) that was attended by leading scholars; an international workshop entitled ‘The Role of the Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding’ (in Baku, 26–27 April 2007); a ministerial brainstorming session organised during the Thirty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Islamabad, 2007) to discuss Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims; attendance at the Third International Conference on ‘Bridging the Gap between the West and the Muslim World’ (in Kuala Lumpur, 9–10 June 2008); and participation in the Conference of Foreign Ministers entitled ‘The Common World, Progress through Diversity’ (in Astana, 17 October 2008).

Again, at all levels the OIC has undertaken an intensive advocacy effort in the West to emphasise the need for political engagement, for

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

politicians and the media to assume an ethical responsibility, and for meaningful dialogue aimed at ushering in a historic reconciliation between the Christian and Islamic worlds.

During what has now been colloquially called the ‘Cartoon Crisis’, the OIC remained engaged with the EU and the European countries to counter and speak out against the discrimination against Muslims and the defamation of Islam. It conducted intensive interactions and communications with the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, including their leaders, along with meetings held with the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. There were bilateral consultations with leaders of European countries in order to ensure the effectiveness of the endeavour. These periods of intensive diplomatic activities were aimed at conveying the collective concern of the OIC and forging a swift and effective response during times of crisis.

An important achievement resulting from our interactions with European leaders was the decision to open an OIC office in Brussels, which we expect to be functional in the near future. On 28 February 2006, the EU Ministerial Council had decided to cite the OIC among the organisations with which it should have significant cooperation in order to foster an atmosphere of dialogue and tolerance.

In addition, the General Secretariat and I had the onerous and unprecedented task of engaging with Europe at an intellectual level and taking part in Europe’s soul-searching discourse on the place of Islam and Muslims in Europe and its relationship with the Muslim world. I myself had the honour to address several fora organised by regional, parliamentary, political and civic bodies, all of which were eager to address this challenge facing Europe.

Notable among OIC activities in Europe were: participation at the OSCE’s ‘Cordoba Conference on Anti—Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance’, in Córdoba, June 2005; my address at both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Enlarged Bureau of the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe, on 4 October 2005 in Strasbourg; organising the Wilton Park Conference on ‘Stereotype and Islamophobia’ in England, on 2–3 May 2006, in which representatives of some of the OIC and EU Member States, the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the EU, academics, media representatives, and Muslim NGOs were among the participants; my address at the Institut Français des Relations Internationales on 29 January 2007 on ‘Is Islam an Intruder in Europe?’;

participation in OSCE meetings on Islamophobia in Bucharest, June 2007 and Córdoba, October 2007; my lecture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, April 2008;¹⁴ co-sponsoring and attending the Copenhagen Conference on 'Education for Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue', 21–22 October 2008; organising the OIC Inter-institutional Forum on 'Universal Shared Values: Challenges and New Paradigms', on 19 December 2008 in Geneva, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and co-sponsoring and attending the OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) Muslim NGOs Roundtable on 'Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE Region', on 17 December 2008.

In the US, the OIC has also made progress in raising awareness of the repercussions of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims. The decision by President Bush to appoint Mr Sada Cumber as his Special Envoy to the OIC, and the US Government's decision to avoid using terminology in its official directives that may be derogatory to Muslims, have opened a new window in our interaction with the US.

Following the conclusion of the US Presidential race, I was among many who sincerely believed that the transition to the US Administration had the potential of ushering in a new era of cooperation and genuine partnership based on mutual understanding and confidence. Moving towards a more peaceful, securer and more prosperous world. To our comfort, President Obama's messages to the Muslim world in his inaugural address, his interview on the Al-Arabia Television Channel and his address at the Turkish Grand National Assembly heralded a new positive approach towards the Muslim world and raised high hopes in the OIC Member States and among the Muslim populations.

On our part, in order to contribute to the beginning of a new era and put our expectations on record, I wrote an open letter addressed to President Obama which was published in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* on the day of his inauguration, 20 January 2009. I also welcomed publicly the landmark speech that the President delivered at Cairo University on 4 June 2009. I was among the guests in the audience when President Obama delivered his speech, and I remember sharing views of appreciation with Secretary of State Clinton, sitting next to each other. The speech clearly confirmed the desire of the US Administration to make a new beginning in the relations between the USA and the Muslim world. I also felt that President

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

Obama gave signals of a more balanced approach on the part of the US Administration to the Middle East conflict, where an active US contribution as an honest broker is more vital than ever. The speech provided a constructive and positive context for the US and the OIC Member States to develop their cooperation with a view to tackling all the challenges enumerated by President Obama. It is crucial that the US Administration speedily takes concrete steps in order not to let the President's historic Cairo speech become weakened in weight and significance. The OIC countries will now be looking to see how Washington follows up on this 'declaration of good will' with its policies and action.

We have also been active in raising awareness among American civil society of the dangers of Islamophobia. The symposium at Georgetown University on the 'Role of the Media in West-Islam Relations' and a roundtable on 'Islam-West Relations' at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington in September 2007 went a long way in serving our purpose. So also did interactions with US think-tanks—the International Peace Institute's 'Turtle Bay Dialogue' on 'Global Challenges, the Role of the OIC', in New York on 1 October 2007, the discussions at the Carnegie Council in New York on 2 October 2007 and at the Council on Foreign Affairs in New York on 4 October 2007—as well as meetings with heads of delegations of European and Muslim countries in September 2007 on the sidelines of the Sixty-second Session of the UN General Assembly. These events were attended by renowned scholars and representatives of diverse faiths and schools of thought, as well as representatives of the media. We stressed the important role of the media in promoting tolerance and understanding and avoiding misrepresentation and distortion.

It bodes well to note that many Western governments, together with some reputable Western research institutions and organisations, are beginning to share the Muslims' concerns over Islamophobia and have demonstrated their willingness to engage in dialogue. Several studies and reports such as those made by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF)¹⁵ in March 2005; the Washington-based Human Rights First¹⁶ in 2007; the Pew Research Center on 25 September 2007; the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC, now known as FRA) in 2007;¹⁷ and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on 12 February 2008 have all found substantial and documented evidence of the rise of Islamophobia in the West.

The OIC has also remained focused on raising the causes of Muslims at the United Nations. It held bilateral meetings with UN officials, including Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, especially during the Sixty-second Session of the General Assembly in October 2007, in which we put across our serious concern over Islamophobia and defamation of religions and the need for an adequate legal international instrument to curb them. The OIC General Secretariat has been working closely with the Permanent Missions of the OIC Member States in Geneva and New York as well as other international actors on the issue of combatting defamation of religions. Despite stiff objections from some Western countries, we were able to adopt resolutions in the UN General Assembly in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 and in the UN Human Rights Council at its Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth Sessions. The resolutions called for action against defamation of religions and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities, and against attempts to link Islam with terrorism and violence.

Following submission of the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, a proposal was submitted by the OIC Group to amend the duties of the Special Rapporteur to report on defamation of religions; this was adopted on 28 March 2008 by thirty-two votes in favour.

As for the UN Alliance of Civilisations that was initiated by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey under the auspices of the United Nations in 2005, it was supported by the OIC, which pledged to fully cooperate with the newly established Alliance. During the second forum of the Alliance, held in Istanbul on 6–7 April 2009, the OIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Alliance which will institutionalise the relationship between the two Organisations and contribute towards undertaking some joint concrete actions in combatting Islamophobia.

Discrimination, intolerance, and incitement to hatred based on religion are matters addressed by laws and legal instruments. The right to be free from discrimination based on religion is enshrined in international laws, particularly the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the EU Convention on Human Rights. Such considerations have also been incorporated into the laws of many countries. UN Special Rapporteurs continue to monitor the infringements of these rights, and to recommend ways to combat Islamophobia and other

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

forms of racism and intolerance. Article 20, para 2 of the ICCPR represents a clear limitation to the right to free speech which, in keeping with Article 19 of the ICCPR, is a clear indication that human rights instruments have provisions prohibiting incitement to religious hatred that are considered as a legitimate safeguard against abuse of the right to free speech. Therefore, for Article 20 to become fully enforced state parties are obliged to adopt necessary legislative measures prohibiting the actions referred to therein. It is painful to note that some circles in the West tend to ignore these laws, which stipulate that all forms of freedom are invariably linked to responsibility, including the need to avoid all forms of incitement to hatred based on religion.

The OIC believes that there are reasons for guarded optimism about the future. The determined efforts of the OIC and its Member States in raising awareness about the negative repercussions of Islamophobia have had the desired impact on the international community as well as on the grass roots. Western governments and officials have started to take serious note of the Muslim world's concerns over the grave dangers and repercussions of defamation of Islam and have begun to demonstrate their willingness to engage in a serious dialogue. The OIC, on its part, has started political engagement with the Western countries to keep the issue alive with their policy makers, by establishing an OIC Ambassadorial Group in Washington and by its decision to open an office in Brussels. In addition, the OIC missions in New York and Geneva will continue to work with the OIC Group to seek adoption of a resolution against the defamation of all religions. At the grass-roots level Muslims exercised restraint and remained less emotional and more rational in their reaction to the incidents that occurred afterwards.

We believe that good practices in this field should be continued and strengthened. These might be taken as patterns to be followed. In this connection the studies undertaken by the Venice Commission on European legislation on blasphemy, incitement to religious hatred and religious insult, and the recommendations on those matters, are worth noting. Similar good practices have been followed by many NGOs, especially in the West, in different fields including education and youth. The OSCE/ODIHR Muslim NGOs initiative to address the discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE region provided a good platform to explore these practices on the ground. The European White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, under the title *The Religious Dimension*, has

produced a commendable study touching on various aspects of the issue including the legal aspects, and on the issue of people's rights to practice their religions.

At the same time, we would like to sound a word of caution that we have only touched the tip of the iceberg because Islamophobic attitudes, prejudices, and mind-sets are deeply entrenched. Whatever positive developments have been witnessed, they fall short of the real action needed.

The political will of the West is still needed to address the issue in definitive terms. Islamophobes will remain free to carry on their attacks as long as there is no enforcement of relevant legal measures to prevent the misuse or abuse of the right to freedom of expression. The political leadership in the West is still wary of adopting a specific legal instrument against actions that may cause incitement to hatred and discrimination, as it might undermine freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is an important principle, but so is the much-touted right to be protected from discrimination that might endanger the safety and well-being of Muslims. The political leaders in the West must raise awareness in their own constituencies at the grass roots of the dangers of Islamophobia, or indeed 'phobia' of any other religion. It is an obligation for all societies to fulfil if we are to live in harmony, concord and peace. While addressing such an important issue of Islamophobia from various perspectives, the stakeholders and international actors should be mindful of its gravity, comprehensiveness and correlation, as well as interaction with other human principles.

My discourse in this chapter is intended not just to underscore the dreadful impact and consequences of religious incitement on the lives of ordinary people in society, but also to stir readers' minds to serious consideration of the urgent need for responsible exercise of freedom of expression. I am a committed supporter of the right to freedom of expression. My respect for that right is inspired by the fact that its use is meant to serve society by upholding truth and speaking out against injustice. But it becomes a matter of concern for all in society when freedom of expression is misused or abused to incite hatred and intolerance, causing hurt, suffering and indignity to those belonging to a different religious faith or cultural background. We have seen this happening all too often, and so I believe it is time for us to seriously consider taking a position on where to draw the line in the exercise of freedom of expression. National laws and international covenants provide explicit legislation against incitement. If freedom of expression is used to incite hatred

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

and intolerance that provoke social unrest and cause violence, then freedom of expression no longer remains a freedom. Rather it becomes an act of violation of individual human rights.

I believe that we can address the issue if we can come together on a common position that calls for offenders who misuse freedom expression for inciting hatred and intolerance to be made accountable for their actions and brought to justice under existing legal instruments. If there are loopholes in the existing laws that allow the perpetrators of hatred and intolerance to escape the legal net, let us not be complacent about formulating new laws that can effectively bring responsibility in the exercise of freedom of expression. In doing this I believe we will be defending freedom of expression more than those who resort to it in defence of their actions but in fact taint it by going against the fundamental spirit of this freedom.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

The OIC reform project necessarily bases itself on a renewed world outlook that is mindful of and responsive to the conditions and demands of the twenty-first century. Thus a number of emerging issues have come to the fore in recent years that led us to embark on new areas of action. Some of these issues were taken up as a consequence of new developments, while others were relevant to the OIC but not dealt with earlier—owing more often than not to lack of concrete initiatives or institutional capacity, rather than unawareness or neglect. In most of these areas we also devised methods and institutional mechanisms applicable for effective action. The development of these mechanisms has been recounted in this book, with particular attention given to the OIC's Ten Year Programme of Action which outlined a comprehensive set of institutional and strategic objectives, together with instruments to measure progress in those objectives.

Within this framework, several fields of action reflecting the Organisation's new outlook have been covered. But there still are other fields in which the OIC now deploys expanded responsibility, in some cases for the first time in its history. This chapter focuses on some subjects of universal relevance, which the OIC now addresses with emphasis. These include humanitarian assistance in case of disasters, good governance, human rights, the status of women, and a policy issue that has implications for all sectors of life: science and technology for development.

While describing those new activities, this chapter reflects at the same time some new modalities and international cooperation schemes which have been adopted in fulfilment of the objectives. As mentioned in preceding chapters, one such development is the OIC's increasing relationship and interaction with other international and regional organisations, which has become an important aspect and an integral part of our policy.

Another development, to which I have given foremost importance, involves the enlisting and cooperation of civil society, in particular Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), in Member States and beyond. This strategy has already yielded some positive results. In adopting this approach we have taken into consideration new developments in social sciences and public administration, theory and practice. For more than fifty years now, social science theory and public policy practice were based on a two-sphere world view: on the one hand there was the public sphere, with state or government being dominant, and on the other the social sphere, dominated by people, and including specific groups in relation to a particular subject. We could have two main agents such as the state and a target population group, or the state and the economy, or the state and the market, and so forth.

This bipolarity ignores, or fails to acknowledge, a third sphere which is gradually coming to the fore and asserting its presence as a key factor: the sphere of 'civil society'. This rather complex and ambiguous term designates a diverse range of agents and institutions that have a share in the conduct of life and business but are not part of formal state or government. Civil society comprises bodies such as community groups, cultural, scientific and professional associations, faith-based associations, self-assistance groups, charities, cooperatives and other unions or institutions set up mostly on a voluntary basis. Civil society existed in the East and the West at all times. The *Waqf* institution, which originated in Islamic society, is a good example of a civil society institution. Various bodies representing civil society have evolved over time. Nowadays international organisations as well as national governments increasingly acknowledge the voice of civil society institutions. Accordingly NGOs are gradually being accorded more space and seats at world fora. For our part, we have taken important steps in this field, as will be detailed in this chapter.

Building social solidarity to manage post-disaster humanitarian relief

The international community, particularly under the aegis of the United Nations, has established specialised agencies to provide relief and assistance whenever disasters occur. There was a perception that the Muslim world, on its part, was failing to address the disasters that have plagued some of its Member States, whether man-made or natural ones. Contrary to popular belief, some of the states endowed with resources have in fact provided succour and relief in times of need through bilateral or multilateral channels. However, the OIC, for quite a while, longed to have a mechanism whereby it could provide direct assistance to Member States faced with disasters.

In the past, the OIC tried to extend support whenever disasters occurred in one of its Member States, albeit with modest success. For example, in the late 1970s the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan resulted in the exodus of millions of refugees; more than 3.5 million refugees poured into Pakistan and over 1.5 million took refuge in Iran. Muslim and non-Muslim charities flooded the refugee camps and there was generous support from many countries, especially from Member States in the Gulf region. The OIC, despite taking a resolute stand on the Afghanistan situation and adopting a unanimous resolution calling for the early withdrawal of Soviet troops, was unable to establish its own mechanism to address the disaster.

This was not the only missed opportunity. In the 1990s, the Muslim world once again witnessed agonising conflicts which affected large numbers of people, among them the civil strife in Somalia which registered a high death toll, not to mention the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees; thousands of internally displaced persons were deprived of their means of sustenance. This decade also witnessed the systematic genocide of Muslims living in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina horrific acts of ethnic cleansing took place and the conflict resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The civil war in Sierra Leone, disasters in Occupied Palestine and, in recent years, the human crises in Darfur and the southern Philippines, as well as repeated cycles of drought and famine in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel countries, are other poignant examples.

Natural disasters have also hit the Muslim countries. The response from the Muslim world has been lacking in a majority of cases, which

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

highlights the urgent need to devise means to address these perilous situations.

The great turning point in the humanitarian activities of the OIC came in the wake of the Third Extraordinary Summit held in Mecca in December 2005. This important Summit laid the legal background for the humanitarian activities of the OIC in the coming years and opened new avenues for humanitarian work under the banner of the OIC. Within the Ten-Year Programme of Action, special reference is made to humanitarian work as:

Islam advocates solidarity with, and assistance to all the needy without discrimination, which requires the Islamic States to develop and adopt a clear strategy on Islamic relief action and support the trend towards cooperation and coordination between individual relief efforts of Islamic States and Islamic civil society institutions on the one hand, and international civil society institutions and organisations on the other.

It is worth mentioning that before this important Summit, the OIC had embarked on some limited projects in humanitarian work, mainly in the field of peace-building in those countries devastated by long wars and confrontations. In this regard, three funds were created to help in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sierra Leone. These funds are completely financed by some OIC countries that are coordinating their activities with the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

The devastating 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia resulted in large-scale destruction and great loss of life. Indonesia was particularly affected; over a hundred thousand Indonesian citizens perished; in the Banda Aceh region, more than 25,000 children were orphaned. Naturally, the magnitude of the economic and human disaster attracted the sympathies of the Muslim world, and after I assumed office in January 2005 one of my early missions was to Banda Aceh to inspect the scope of destruction and confer with the Indonesian authorities on how best to address such a calamity.

I learned at that time that the President of Indonesia was very preoccupied with the fate of the orphans, and keen to ensure that they were raised in an environment close to their culture, because many foreign humanitarian relief institutions were poised to take care of orphans and raise them in foreign lands. The Indonesian leader thought the OIC might consider providing for their needs, and intimated his desire to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr Badawi, in his capacity as the

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

President of the Tenth OIC Summit. The Prime Minister, in turn, consulted with the then Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, and with me. With the support and assistance of the Saudi Government, the OIC diligently embarked upon a comprehensive plan to take full care of all the child victims of the tsunami in the region of Banda Aceh. To this end, our plan was and continues to be based on the mobilisation of all the Member States as well as civil society organisations and philanthropists to sponsor these orphaned children.

Subsequently, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, summoned an urgent meeting of all ambassadors of OIC Member States to discuss how their respective countries could contribute to alleviation of the suffering of the child victims of the tsunami. It was decided that the OIC would take responsibility for all these children. A long-term plan was thus envisaged in alliance with the IDB and philanthropists from the Muslim world to provide sustenance, through sponsorship of each child, until he or she attained the age of maturity. The Saudi King and the Crown Prince made generous contributions guaranteeing the success of this important humanitarian programme run by the OIC General Secretariat. Some nations also took responsibility for some of the children; for example, the United Arab Emirates took responsibility for 5,000 children and Turkey, Qatar and Russia also pledged their support. To sustain these efforts, we designed a special programme to take full care of these orphans. We called it the 'OIC Alliance for the Safeguard of the Children Victims of the Tsunami'. The number of sponsors continues to increase with generous support from private philanthropists and state sponsors.

During our preparations for this task, we noted that similar models had been success stories only when NGOs were motivated to step forward and to cooperate with the international organisations. There was such a wide vacuum between the OIC and the NGO community in the Muslim world that a partnership was obligatory if the resource disbursement could reach those affected through credible channels. Therefore, it was important for us to work to build a strong partnership with the NGOs, without which our mission would not have been successful.

Expanding the scope of activities with NGOs required approval from the Member States. Since the OIC was an intergovernmental organisation that in a way had its doors closed to outsiders, especially to charities and NGOs, we had to create awareness among the Mem-

ber States to affect change. The NGOs, on their part, had legitimate expectations of recognition for their charitable work, which in the case of many of them had been carried out for a long time.

It is astonishing that this mechanism had not been conceived throughout all these years. Our initial reaction was ‘Why didn’t the OIC think of it in the past?’ The problem was that, until recently, we were resigned to the fact that the objectives of the OIC were only limited to its stated activities. This erroneous perception widened the gap between the OIC and the NGOs on one hand and NGOs and governments on the other.

However, prior and deeper introspection was required to assess our own capabilities—the OIC had no department able to assume the responsibility of undertaking humanitarian and relief work. Thus, in our early attempts at pursuing the idea, we created a unit within the OIC General Secretariat, with our existing resources, to run the OIC Alliance for the Safeguard of the Children Victims of the Tsunami project. To create a rapport between the OIC General Secretariat and the NGOs, we had to lay down a framework for cooperation. However, without the approval of the Member States the new vistas of cooperation between the OIC and other stakeholders were not feasible. Indeed, giving recognition to NGOs functioning within the Member States was a rather sensitive issue requiring a consensual approach by their Governments. However, this problem was overcome by protracted efforts by the General Secretariat in rallying the Member States to achieve a consensus leading to adoption of a resolution by the Thirty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (Islamabad, 2007), which framed the rules that would allow NGOs to enjoy a consultative status at the OIC.

This development itself was momentous, as a large number of organisations that had previously worked in humanitarian assistance, completely isolated from the OIC General Secretariat, received a clear signal from the Member States on their future role as mutual stakeholders in work towards this common goal.

We later accelerated the process of interacting with the NGOs working in humanitarian relief in Member States and our first contacts, on a wider scale, took place in Amman in 2006 for Palestine-specific activities. Later, in Istanbul in 2007, cooperation was again agreed on the rebuilding of Lebanon, after the 2006 Israeli incursion when the massive Israeli air raids inflicted great destruction.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Before the Eleventh Islamic Summit (Dakar, 2008), the President of Senegal, a staunch advocate of the OIC reforms, had very fruitful exchanges with me on the future vision of civil society's role in addressing calamities. The Summit was an excellent opportunity to make recommendations to Member States. However, extensive work was required to adopt a comprehensive framework for the NGOs' involvement in the Organisation's plans to undertake humanitarian activities of a varied nature. Thus, it was decided that President Wade would convene the first meeting of the Muslim NGOs in Saly Portudal, Senegal on 7–9 March 2008, a meeting that was attended by sixty NGOs from twenty-seven countries, prior to the Dakar Summit. To prepare the blueprint for the Saly meeting, a consultative meeting was earlier arranged by the Government of Qatar and was held in Doha on 15–16 January 2008.

We had finally arrived at a stage that only a few years before had been considered a far-off goal. The conference provided a propitious opportunity for civil society organisations to exchange their experiences, their views on the obstacles to operating in different conflict situations, the role of the Member States as they saw it, and the future cooperation they expected from the OIC General Secretariat.

The Final Communiqué of the First Conference of Humanitarian NGOs in the OIC Member States laid down a vital framework which has a wide array of features. On capacity-building and databases, it noted that capacity was inadequate and needed to be strengthened by building professional skills, so that the NGOs could effectively contribute to the development efforts. It also recommended the establishment within the OIC of a Centre for Studies, Information and Training to be concerned with the work of organisation, disasters, crises and development needs in Member States. Cooperation, in the form of information-sharing between state organisations working in the field and the experienced organisations that might be involved, was seen as vital. It was also emphasised that the experience of international organisations should be utilised for building databases and that all activities should be rooted in the principles of Islamic values.

As far as the 'Regulatory National Framework on Charitable Activities in OIC Member States' is concerned, the Communiqué underscored the importance of enacting national legislation in Member States for the oversight of charitable and humanitarian organisations, by balancing the interests in such a way as to allow freedom for operations in

accordance with the best international practice. In this regard, the Communiqué emphasised the need for mutual consultation between the stakeholders while drafting the national legislation. It also called for the adoption of model rules and regulations to be used as a guide for Member States, and recommended the establishment of parliamentary committees which could build relations with the charitable organisations. The Communiqué further recommended that Islamic institutions of *Zakat*, *Waqfs*, and donations for charitable activities should be provided with the necessary legislative cover, and that the activities in the Member States be governed by codes of conduct and honour.

The Communiqué advanced a number of proposals to strengthen the working relationship between humanitarian organisations and the OIC. In particular, it recommended information-sharing in technical fields, the establishment of a Relief Fund in the Muslim world, the holding of annual meetings of NGOs preceding the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings, and the establishment of a Humanitarian Department within the OIC in accordance with the provisions of the Ten-Year Programme of Action. The Communiqué specifically noted the need to allay misperceptions about NGOs. On the basis of the recommendations of this important conference, we are now working on preparing comprehensive documents on the relations between the OIC and NGOs in Member States, the role and structure of the Forum of NGOs within the General Secretariat, and the conditions to be fulfilled by the NGOs so as to have observer status in the Organisation. These important documents will be submitted to the Council of Foreign Ministers for adoption, after which a comprehensive establishment of relations between NGOs and the OIC will be promulgated. For the first time within the history of the Organisation, this will open the door for a great era of cooperation and interaction between the governments and civil society organisations in OIC countries.

In a short span of five years, these OIC humanitarian activities—in the Member States and the civil society organisations have—played a proactive role—have spurred great interest in the Muslim world. One notable achievement was the holding of the International Conference to address drought and food shortage challenges in Niger, held in Doha on 12–13 June 2007, spearheaded by the Humanitarian Department. A total of US\$388 million was mobilised by the donors. Three development-oriented programmes were implemented by the donors, for national food crop preservation, envi-

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

ronmental restoration through rain water filtration works, and food security programmes through increased irrigation. Since then, the OIC has opened an office in Niger, with the assistance of the host Government, and implementation of the programme has started in cooperation with various partners.

The great challenges we are facing in the Muslim world in the humanitarian field, and the frequent disasters it experiences, mean that we will strengthen cooperation in the humanitarian sector with all relevant actors. In the same vein, the OIC is now active in coping with various disasters and humanitarian crises whenever they occur in OIC Member States. It has dispatched many humanitarian missions to Darfur, Afghanistan, the Comoros, Bangladesh, Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia, among others. Efforts are underway to convene a Donors' Conference on Darfur so as to mobilise the Muslim world to contribute actively to stability, development and peace-building there. In Somalia, despite the political instability and the daunting threats to staff working in humanitarian relief, various programmes are also under way.

The OIC has also issued appeals on various occasions, during the last few years, for donations for the Palestinians, especially the besieged population of Gaza. Many convoys containing food, medication and other items were delivered to the needy population in Gaza.

To conduct these vigorous programmes, the OIC is strengthening its relations with many actors in the humanitarian field at the international and regional levels. To this end, I appreciate the direct and developing relations we have with UN humanitarian institutions—the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and others. We have also developed good relations with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and many European organisations. It is one of our major objectives to develop and enter into dynamic cooperation with all organisations in the humanitarian domain.

Good governance and promoting human rights

Moving Towards Good Governance

Good governance in the Muslim world is a much discussed issue. In many ways, modern progress is judged on the basis of how responsive

governments are to their people by affording them good governance and making their citizens active participants in the political processes. Lack of good governance and pluralistic institutions is often cited as one of the reasons for underdevelopment. The OIC Member States, with the diversity they represent, have passed through their own unique political, cultural and historical development. These experiences have affected them in varying degrees; some remain beholden to the past, while others have achieved some progress. However, owing to a lack of political will or, in some cases, of expertise in the field, they have not achieved the baseline of good governance.

The end of the Cold War brought about a worldwide impetus for democratic reforms. The Muslim world also felt this momentum and some of its responses have been successful. It has also been influenced by the global events that have left their impact on its own democratic traditions. Although in some Muslim countries rights and freedoms, in the form of representative institutions, are lacking, this does not necessarily mean that there is a complete lack of freedom and rights for people in those countries. In fact, freedoms emanating from religion and, in some instances, cultural traditions have allowed people a considerable margin of fundamental rights. There has been participation in the governance processes through representation in nominated consultative councils which are fairly representative of individuals from various segments of society. This, of course, to many would be a semblance of participatory democracy, in its most imperfect form.

The democratic experimentation in many Muslim countries has witnessed many ups and downs. While some have been successful in the building of pluralistic institutions, others have been failures. The encouraging news is that many members have embarked upon reforms, slowly and gradually. Frequently, they have found it difficult to surmount barriers of tribal structures. However, with more awareness and education, the pressure for good governance practices has increased.

We have also seen in many of our Member States endeavours at reform in the administrative and judicial arena with the help of other multilateral institutions. There are also many specialised programmes being undertaken by the countries in the Middle East and North Africa region with the assistance of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the UNDP. The ultimate objectives of these reforms are to increase the participation of the people, establish the rule of law and transparency, and make the system more

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

responsive, inclusive, efficient, effective and accountable to the state institutions and to the people.

The OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action declared completely categorical terms the necessity to introduce good governance and uphold human rights in the Member States. It asserted the importance of good governance, human rights and representative institutions. The Muslim world has often shown disapproval of changes being imposed from the outside and has emphatically rejected interference, as it may destabilise the ongoing reform process. With any wholesale reform agenda, embedded traditions specific to Member States may resist change. New ideas in these cases need to be first fully ingrained in public life. In the same context, the Muslim world has to be amenable to the fact that modernising the state structures and introducing reforms is a holistic process and the participation of its citizens is the only path towards progress.

Judging from the particular historical and cultural experience of the state, it is our view that no specific model can be considered as ideal and models have to be adapted on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, Member States of the OIC may examine the best models of governance without bias against any particular system, and introduce it with the objective of achieving economic progress and development with security of rights. It is also important to note that without adequate checks and balances in any system, the state institutions cannot function effectively. This requires freedom of the press, which acts independently in evaluating and critically viewing decision making, in the public interest or otherwise. The Member States have also taken a keen interest in enhancing the integrity of public institutions and governments. Also, in many Member States, measures to curb corruption have been adopted by creation of anti-corruption bodies, and in some of them by introducing the institution of Ombudsman for the oversight of public and private institutions.

As for promoting and respecting human rights in the Muslim world, it was abundantly clear that human rights and the exercise of freedoms are fundamental to our Organisation's objectives. All Member States of the OIC are in agreement that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides the framework of essential guarantees for their citizens. All agree, in principle, on the importance of the declaration and see it as a powerful statement of common standards and shared values. Islam, fourteen centuries ago, established an exemplary code of human rights which conferred on all human beings dignity and honour and

condemned injustice, oppression and exploitation. Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the concept of equality among all humans, transcending all ethnicities, colour, language and social status. These rights are the bedrock of Islamic teaching and no ruler, government assembly or authority can alter, curtail or violate them in any way.¹ Nearly eighteen years ago, the OIC adopted the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights which has complemented the universal values enshrined in the Universal Declaration. However, this was not the end of the journey for the OIC. The OIC Ten-Year Programme laid the foundation for a major undertaking by the Member States, seeing the promotion of and respect for human rights as the cornerstone for reform in the Muslim world. The Programme called for an 'OIC Charter of Human Rights', comprehensive in its scope. Member States will be able to extend its benefits to their citizens, which may enliven the universal values that are, until now, not in the shape of a binding codified convention. It is our view that the Muslim world, in the context of the universality of international values, has an obligation to itself to reconstruct its ideas to conform to the realities of the twenty-first century. Its statesmen, leaders, jurists, scholars, intellectuals, policy makers, academics and civil society in general all have their responsibilities to contribute in the debate.

There is an ongoing debate about how to ensure respect for religious values and symbols within the human rights framework, marking out the borders between freedom of expression and advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Islamic scholars are capable of defining the parameters of rights as they have managed to innovate and adapt the Islamic banking system to the requirements of modern times. In my view, we can start with the common legal ground that exists in the international instruments and in Islamic law on the equality of human beings, freedom to profess religion, rights to life, security and property, and many other rights which exist in a very developed shape in Islamic jurisprudence.

Again, the debate on modernity needs to relate to the way the citizens of a Muslim state approach various issues concerning their practical life and their spiritual needs. The test of freedom for citizens to choose a certain action should be seen as dependent on how they may view that act in the light of practicality, morality and the recognition that freedoms are to be exercised in a way so as to avoid infringing

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

upon the rights of other individuals. In recent times we have seen that many Muslim scholars, and the number is growing, have strongly argued that Islamic teachings are highly compatible with the modern notion of human rights. Sadly, we have seen how the defamation of Islam and its symbols has twisted the debate, with accusations by some elements in the West aiming to undermine the values of Islam and its revered symbols in the name of freedom of expression. Liberty, especially the freedom of expression, should always be linked with responsibility and exercised within the boundaries of decency and without inciting others through hate speech. That Western propaganda aims to build walls against the receptivity of universal values and is not helpful in building a global consensus on upholding of human rights.

Adoption of the Amended Charter and Provisions on Human Rights

The Eleventh Islamic Summit, in Dakar in 2008, adopted the amended OIC Charter, which had far reaching ramification for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It ushered in a new era for the Organisation and its members. The objectives of the Charter, in many of its provisions, have highlighted the importance of good governance, human rights, and the upholding of international common values. The Charter also extends its resolve to protect the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in the non-member states. This new approach, in the objectives of the Charter, marked a great step forward in adapting to global human rights values, and involves closer alignment of principle to the international instruments and the practices of other regional or intergovernmental organisations.

During the meeting of the Summit's High Level Advisory Panel—composed of eminent persons from the Muslim world, convened to propose a new vision for the OIC charter—the debate on the importance of enshrining the rights in specific language was exhaustively discussed. All eminent personalities supported embodying human rights specifically in the Charter. During the negotiating process, the OIC Member States adopted a comprehensive overall view of human rights and their importance. Emphasis was specifically laid not only on general rights, but also on the rights of women, children and family.

- Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights

The new Charter of the OIC made the Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights an organ of the Organisation, on a par with the others, elevating the importance of human rights. On 9 February 2009, we initiated the process of establishing this Commission by holding the first meeting of a select group of prominent experts on human rights, entrusted with laying the foundation of such a commission and outlining its vision, scope and objectives. There are various successful working models of international bodies, especially at the UN and other regional organisations, which have, over the last six decades, made endeavours for the promotion and protection of human rights. It is our view that whichever mechanism will evolve, as long as it serves the purpose of stressing the importance of human rights, it will underscore the resolve of the OIC and its Member States to uphold human rights within the context of the OIC.

- Protecting the Rights of Women

The Muslim world is not shy about debating the issue of gender equality. Islam does not place any fetters on extending the benefits of rights to women. Ever since the start of the last century, the debate on social change in the Muslim world, in the context of the rights of women, has opened up discussions in many Muslim societies. Inequality in the rights or the treatment of women, based on gender, has no roots in Islamic jurisprudence. Should there be any doubt about the rights of women in Islam, this should be attributed to local traditions and social structures, but not to the teachings of the faith. The growth of family laws and the protection provided to women show how social reformers have changed practices previously viewed as discriminatory. In many Muslim states, including Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Malaysia, Iran, Indonesia and others, there has been legislation to provide adequately for the rights of the women.

Gender equality is not disputable, as Islam aims to forcefully elevate the concept of equality among human beings. There is no concept of moral, spiritual or intellectual superiority in the context of gender. The mere physical superiority of the male gender is not the yardstick through which gender rights are viewed in Islam.

An important objective of the comprehensive reform that we seek is to improve the status of women in the OIC Member States and

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

empower them to have a better status similar to that enjoyed by their peers in economically advanced countries. To this end, serious efforts have been made during the past five years. This trend is inspired by the objectives enshrined in the new Charter: to strengthen and promote the rights of women and their participation in all spheres of life.

The OIC's Ten-Year Programme of Action has provided the necessary impetus to address the rights of women. The Programme puts the development of women's rights in context. It essentially seeks change in legislation to uplift the socio-economic, cultural, social and political status of women in Muslim societies in accordance with the values of justice and equality. Moreover, it aims at adhering to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by following Islamic values. The effort will also highlight the importance of women's education and female literacy, and seeks to develop an 'OIC Covenant on the Rights of Women in Islam'.

Preceding the Third Extraordinary Summit, the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Sana'a in 2005 decided to hold the first conference on Muslim Women and their Role in the Development of Islamic Society. This was held in Istanbul, in November 2006. At the same meeting, a decision was taken to draft a plan of action to enhance the role of women. The Second Conference on Women, held in Cairo on 24–25 November 2008, adopted a landmark document, the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). This plan reflects the approach by Member States in improving the condition of women and increasing opportunities for them through various national institutions, in particular through legislative measures. The plan's objectives include the eradication of poverty, the achievement of sustainable development and the provision of adequate resources and support as essential components of efforts to attain gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels and in all sectors. It seeks to raise women's participation in decision-making mechanisms from local to national level and to provide equal opportunities for women through access to quality education, health care, and enhanced participation. The plan also aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and to combat violence against women.

Various measures have been proposed to implement this plan. The OPAAW is a comprehensive document that prioritises the needs of women in the context of their relationship with society as a whole. The onus of implementing the plan essentially rests with the Member States.

The plan also made specific recommendations to establish a division within the General Secretariat responsible for family affairs, and to constitute a Governmental Expert Group to follow up on issues pertaining to women in Member States. It recommended that the Member States hold regular conferences, seminars and symposia to discuss and coordinate approaches to women's issues on different fora and project the true image and cause of women at the national and international levels. The plan foresees a biennial Ministerial Conference on Women. It will endeavour to enhance female literacy and provide opportunities to girls and young women, including exchange programmes between the Member States. The plan involves a new organ in Egypt to address the role of women in development, and to synergise globally the development of businesswomen for improvement of entrepreneurial and managerial skills. It envisages that women will be treated as equal partners in all decision-making processes, and provided with a favourable environment and security in their various roles.

The OPAAW is the first serious attempt by Member States to address this much neglected sphere of development, and will help in improving the social and economic development of women in the Member States and the elimination of their marginalisation.

Reinvigorating science, technology and innovation in the Muslim world

The very survival of mankind has become endangered with pressures of an increased population and imprudent use of natural resources. Today one of the most serious challenges for mankind is to limit the damage already inflicted on the global environment and to conceive sustainable policies for development. Global warming is leading to severe weather changes and possible depletion of natural resources. Parallel to the environmental degradation there are perennial problems of shortages of water, vital for agricultural production. Many OIC Member States require innovative technologies to address their food shortages and feed their populations. The world is also witnessing the depletion of global energy resources. In recent years, access to usable energy became almost beyond the reach of the weak economies of many OIC Member States that are not endowed with natural resources. Thus, renewable and alternate sources of energy are other major challenges. Globally, if sources of energy become scarce, there

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

will be a massive chain reaction that could lead to disasters of great magnitude. The fundamental paradigm of development that was achieved in developed countries has not been achieved until now in many OIC Member States where access to basic health, education and infrastructure facilities is lacking. These countries are frequently called upon to deal with the epidemics confronting them, at a time when they are obliged to address fundamental problems of underdevelopment. The meagre resources available for development are usually not adequate for employing the scientific and technological innovations needed for bridging the development gap so as to help their countries in embracing the modern age.

Therefore, today the Muslim world stands at a historic crossroads amidst global challenges and changes, with immense repercussions for the future. We believe that these challenges and changes could be dealt with through a forward-looking strategic vision that would empower the Muslim world to tackle them by strengthening its collective will and joint action. Such a vision has, fortunately, been adopted when the Member States agreed on Vision 2020 (Vision 1441 Hijra) and the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action.

The essence of our vision could be summed up as follows: 'OIC Member States are committed to becoming a community that values knowledge and is competent in utilising and advancing science and technology to enhance socio-economic well-being of the *Ummah*'. Socio-economic growth emanates mainly from Science and Technology and Innovation (STI), and these are the most reliable and sustainable sources of wealth. Hence, the Muslim world has no choice but to commit itself to acquire knowledge, to master Science and Technology and to promote Innovation in order to ensure its rightful position in the world.

The key to realising these objectives is the development of indigenous and qualified human resources. We have envisioned twelve strategic thrusts that would help achieve our vision. The first is commitment; we need to ensure that there is commitment at the highest political level to sustained investments in human resource development and infrastructure by both government and private sector. We need also to strive to achieve basic education for all and lifelong education, and to lay the ground for improvement and reform of educational institutions and curricula at all levels, to make them more compatible with the basic needs of their societies and enable them to promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. In this context, we need to

work on our capabilities and capacity—in other words, to improve our ability to acquire and master STI. Human power is our ultimate resource. Our industries need to be injected with talented and skilful workforces to ensure their vitality and strength for strong competitive advantage. Similarly, our science and technology institutional framework needs to be revamped so that it can provide the necessary leadership in driving the agenda for change.

Culture is yet another aspect that needs to be worked on. To develop a society that is appreciative and supportive of knowledge and learning, we need to create an environment that encourages and rewards ideas, supports science and innovation, promotes entrepreneurship and inspires interest in exploring the frontiers of knowledge.

In the same perspective, collaboration must also be encouraged, with a view to promoting smart partnerships and synergy among our scientists, engineers, academics, legislators, research institutions, universities, industries, and public and private sectors to enhance the effectiveness of the skills and talents of our manpower. We also need to work with the community in general to improve the quality of life for our societies by making STI relevant to their daily lives in terms of technologies enhancing efficiency and convenience. We need to develop the innovation capacity of the community by empowering it to use science and technology to meet local needs. Since our resources in manpower and finance are limited, we need to prioritise so as to ensure that resources are directed to areas that will yield maximum benefits.

The pursuit of our vision and the realisation of our objectives should enhance our resolve to assist our disadvantaged and Least Developed Member States. Moreover, we need to tackle the issue of poverty. We must strive to eradicate poverty as indicated in the framework of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals, by initiating and implementing a comprehensive development plan aimed at the removal of destitution and poverty with internal and international help, in financial assistance and in kind.

Another target is the environment. Knowledge and experience sharing, based on a foundation of global partnership, should produce the understanding and the culture of development that would contribute to avoiding continued man-induced deterioration of the environment. To attain this goal we should aim at harmonising regulations and uniform standards as we strive for a fair and equitable sharing of benefits of knowledge and know-how; we require harmonised laws, regulations

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

and standards at the national and international levels. Finally, we need to create an effective financial foundation at both national and international levels that would facilitate the flow of knowledge and know-how between countries, specifically between the developing South and the developed North.

In order to realise these objectives, we have felt the need to contemplate a paradigm shift for the management of STI in the Muslim world. To that end we should continuously appraise the existing state of the STI through tabulating and interpreting data, and also by troubleshooting and fault-finding to recognise why some Muslim societies are not as developed as expected in this respect. We also need to improve and upgrade cooperation between the Member States with a view to promoting and elevating the level of STI and manpower skills and thus reducing the gaps between the least and most developed ones. We have to maximise and utilise the scientific and technological potential of Member States, in order to foster their technical capacities, capabilities and skills to be able to face the new challenges.

As young generations play a vital role in shaping the future, we should consider the young population in Islamic countries as a vital source for social and economic development in their respective countries. Training the youth by broadening their skills and tapping their innovative capabilities will be a step forward in advancing STI in the OIC Member States. This should be coupled with pooling the collaborative private sector, proactive government and innovative art as catalysts to harness the latent creative energy, talent and financial resources.

In all our undertakings, we should bear in mind Islamic values in all aspects of STI and human resource development.

On the basis of the Ten-Year Programme of Action's conceptual framework and recommendations, the OIC General Secretariat has already embarked on a number of initiatives, to be described below.

OIC University Ranking

Higher education forms the bedrock for learning and training, and it is the basis on which human resources are built and developed. In order to respond to the growing demand of market forces of the knowledge-based economy, a fresh look into the higher education system in the OIC countries in terms of its quality and relevance is deemed necessary. Hence, a comprehensive and objective methodology was developed to evaluate the performance of universities in the OIC countries in terms

of relevance and quality of education and research output. The outcome of such an evaluation shall be reflected in ranking the universities. The final goal will be to select at least twenty universities to be elevated to the rank of the top five hundred world universities. These universities will then be taken as models for others to follow suit.

Early Harvest and Mega Projects

Another important initiative is the launching of the concept of the Early Harvest Project (EHP) which aims to tap and enhance the existing technological capacities, capabilities and skills of the OIC Member States in attainable advanced technologies. EHP is a concept centred on the need for the developed OIC Member States to cooperate for the development of STI in the least developed ones. The project encourages the involvement of the private sector in the technology capacity-building of Member States. The EHP tends particularly to define fast tracked, focused, functional and financially sound projects for the viability of Research and Development (R&D) in STI.

Furthermore, we have recently begun launching a symbiotic concept called the Mega Project (MP). This is a concept centred on the principle of common interest, joint design, joint manufacturing and common marketing of specific commercialised high-tech products within the OIC Member States. Already, business plans for Mega Projects for motor vehicles and aircraft are underway, while another important Mega Project being contemplated concerns Biopharmaceuticals.

We are hoping that through such projects, the limited resources of the current STI and manpower capacities that are now scattered in a number of the OIC Member States will be pooled together. They could also create new opportunities for trade, open new markets, provide new employment, facilitate professional and expertise interchange, promote scientific exchange and streamline research and development.

Atlas of Islamic-World Innovation

To know the existing state of STI in the Islamic world, we need to come up with a novel method of mapping their composition through a comprehensive and painstaking process of data acquisition and data interpretation. The OIC General Secretariat together with the Royal Society, the independent scientific society of the U.K., launched the massive project of the Atlas of Islamic-World Innovation.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Today the global economies are driven by innovation in science and technology. In order to secure economic development, there is no choice but to acquire advanced technologies and thus pave the way to a more vibrant economy—the knowledge economy. This can only be achieved through a sound and an effective science and technology policy commitment. Unfortunately, R&D spending between 1996 and 2003 across a representative sample of twenty OIC Member States averaged 0.34 per cent, compared with a global average of 2.36 per cent. We hope that the proposed Atlas of Islamic-World Innovation will render some explanations of this.

Despite the dim picture there are, at the individual country level, a growing number of eye-catching developments that reinforce the potential for a wider shift in the innovation capabilities of the Muslim world. Particular impetus is coming from oil-rich Member States, which now see R&D as critical to their long-term prosperity, against a backdrop of resource depletion, climate change and a gradual shift towards post-oil economies. A short, limited survey reveals that there is a new dynamic towards greater awareness of the paramount importance of science and technology in the Muslim world.

Turkey has doubled its research spending in the past five years and is halfway to its goal of spending 1 per cent of its GDP for that purpose by 2010. Over the last twelve years, Turkey has risen from 27th to 19th in the world rankings for rates of scientific publication. Treading the same line, President Mubarak of Egypt announced in December 2006 the launch of an Egyptian ‘decade of science and technology’ with plans to scale up research budgets and boost levels of international cooperation. In 2007 Saudi Arabia was endowed with an outstanding University of Scientific Research and Learning. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology opened its doors to students and in 2008 it planned to digitise with the US Library of Congress all Arab and scientific records. The information will reflect the great achievements and past glory of Islamic civilisation and will be available free of charge on the Internet through the World Digital Library. The State of Qatar has constructed a 2,500-acre Education City just outside Doha, containing international campuses of five of the world’s top universities. Moreover, a Founding Conference of the Arab Expatriate Scientists was held in Doha in April 2006. The main aim of the meeting was to look into ways and means of assimilating highly qualified Arab manpower and reversing the brain drain. The 180 scientists of Arab origin from differ-

ent countries who participated in this conference surveyed the research opportunities in the Arab world, the available channels of collaboration and the mechanisms of partnership. Qatar, in its turn, announced the allocation of US\$2 billion for scientific research up to 2010, in addition to the US\$300 million allocated for the fund called the 'Well of Knowledge' Fund.

In other parts of the Muslim world, Pakistan has also embarked on a similar initiative to tackle its own brain drain. Within the OIC family, several institutions such as the IDB, the Islamic World Academy of Science (IAS) and ISESCO have undertaken studies on the same subject and are already implementing certain activities in this respect. In Iran, the number of scientific papers produced rose from just over 500 in 1995 to around 9,000 in 2007. Iran is now one of the most scientifically productive countries in the Middle East. In 2006, the government of Nigeria created a new National Council for Research and Development and poured US\$5 billion into its Petroleum Technology Development Fund to support research and education, while in May 2007 Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, announced the creation of a US\$10 billion foundation to establish research centres in Arab universities and offer research grants to Arab scientists.

The path to a more innovative Muslim world is not free of obstacles. Alongside glimpses of progress, daunting challenges remain. Salaries, infrastructure and research grants are seriously low. As a consequence, there is still a substantial brain drain out of the Muslim world, with many talented scientists and engineers opting to pursue their careers in the West, while there is little sign of a flow of returnees. We hope that the ongoing concept of Mega Projects will remedy some of these problems.

Today most of the OIC Member States are striving to achieve economic development by wholesale importation of various kinds of technologies from developed countries. We recognise that not all technologies can be transferred unless there is knowledgeable and skilful manpower to operate and manage the imported technologies locally. As a remedy, and in order to avoid over-dependence on the developed countries, the OIC Member States are being encouraged to concentrate on education and training in Science and Technology, using their existing capabilities through partnership.

While we must face the fact that there is still much to do, I believe that some of the good work that we are putting in will show results in

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

the near future. Going forward, we must continue to pursue strategies and programmes that are sustainable and responsive to international developments. We should also continue to rely upon collective will and joint action on the part of the OIC Member States. Most critically, we must pool our resources, share expertise and work together to improve the condition of the *Ummah*.

Change is never easy. Resistance must always be assumed. The inertia of the status quo is very strong and this is especially true when the situation is serious and the changes required are huge. There will be the ever-present temptation to undertake just incremental and cosmetic modification. We need to recognise that there cannot be enough efforts towards revitalisation and renewal of capacity building and human resources development that the Muslim world needs and deserves.

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

The OIC started as a political forum aiming to bring together the Muslim world around common issues. But it was soon realised that for joint political action to be effective, it had to be based upon and complemented by wide-ranging cooperation, including joint economic action. The First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah in 1970, declared that the participating governments should consult together with a view to promoting close cooperation and mutual assistance in the economic, technical, scientific, cultural and spiritual fields.

At the Second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Lahore in 1974, the assembled ministers made clear and detailed references to the economic issues facing the OIC countries. The forum initiated appropriate action with a view to establishing, promoting and consolidating economic and commercial cooperation, by establishing the necessary institutional and multilateral legal framework. In this connection, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) was established in 1974 as a subsidiary organ of the OIC to provide financial support for cultural, educational, institutional, technical and economic activities in the Islamic world. This was soon followed in 1974 by the establishment of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), which became operational a year later, as a specialised institution to assist the socio-economic development efforts of the Member States, promote economic cooperation and extend foreign trade financing to them.

Several bodies and affiliated institutions were then established to assist the OIC and its Member States in pursuing the stated economic and commercial aims. The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and

Member States, instead of ten states only as was decided initially, the Fifth Islamic Summit (Kuwait, 1987) officially enlarged COMCEC's membership to that effect. COMCEC held its First Session in November 1984 in Istanbul and formed a Follow-up Committee which held its first meeting in September 1985. Later, its annual ministerial level sessions and Follow-up Committee meetings were regularised, to be held in autumn and spring every year, respectively. The 1987 Fifth Islamic Summit adopted a set of resolutions concerning the organisation of COMCEC's work, and recognised the overall supervisory role of COMCEC in implementation of the 1981 Plan of Action. The Sixth Islamic Summit endorsed the Statute and the Rules of Procedure of COMCEC, which included the expanded membership clause. The first COMCEC Session held in 1984 adopted a resolution on the 'Implementation of the Short Term Programme for the Promotion of Trade among OIC Member States'.

The First COMCEC also started work on the establishment of three multilateral financial schemes in order to promote intra-OIC trade among its members. The first, the Longer Term Trade Financing Scheme, better known as the Export Financing Scheme (EFS), became operational in 1987 under the Islamic Development Bank. It aims to promote exports of non-conventional goods by providing funds. The second, the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), was established as a member of the IDB group in 1994 and became operational in 1996 after completion of necessary procedures. It aims to expand trade and the flow of investment among member countries by providing insurance and reinsurance for export credit and foreign investment. The third, the Agreement on the Multilateral Islamic Clearing Union, was prepared by the Islamic Development Bank and approved, in principle, by the Eighth COMCEC in 1992. It aims to create a system for facilitating settlement of monetary transactions among the members of the union through providing an opportunity for them to pay in their national currencies while trading with other member countries. The Tenth COMCEC in 1994 invited the OIC members to consider working out clearing arrangements among themselves which could, in principle, be flexible with regard to goods covered, based on voluntary participation in terms of membership. However, such arrangements did not materialise. One of the most important achievements of COMCEC was the drawing up of the Framework Agreement on Trade Preferential System, which was approved by the Sixth COMCEC in 1990.

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

In addition to the regular COMCEC agenda relating to economic and commercial cooperation, ministerial level meetings were also held concurrently with the annual sessions on Industry, Food Security and Agricultural Development, Transport, Communications, Energy, Infrastructure and Public Works, and Technical Cooperation. In other words, most of the ten areas of economic cooperation of the 1981 Plan of Action were taken up one after the other.

At the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, the world witnessed major historical events, such as the fall of Berlin Wall, German reunification, the collapse of the Socialist Bloc, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Single European Market. These transformations in the world political and economic environment created concern among the Member States about the possible effects on their economies and the entire world economy, and also necessitated a review of OIC economic cooperation, particularly the 1981 Plan of Action and its implementation. The idea evolved at the Sixth Session of COMCEC in 1990, and the Sixth Islamic Summit, held in Dakar in 1991, requested COMCEC to formulate new strategies for the Plan of Action.

In line with this decision, an initial draft was prepared by SESRIC and finalised through a series of expert group meetings. Subsequently, the new strategy and the Plan were adopted by the Tenth Session of COMCEC in 1994 and endorsed by the Seventh Islamic Summit, in Casablanca in the same year. Based on the OIC's past experiences and the new global changes and agenda, the new strategy set the overall objectives and basic principles, modalities and mechanisms, while the Plan identified, in each sector, problems as well as sectoral objectives. It defined programmes of action in ten fields.² Despite the various efforts made, implementation of the 1981 Plan of Action has turned out to be slow. Indeed, the success of the Plan remained rather limited in terms of both tangible end-results and follow-up at technical and political levels. The slow progress in implementation of the Plan of Action remains a continuing concern for COMCEC as well as the OIC.

In fact, several varied factors have impeded or slowed down the follow-up and successful implementation of the Plan of Action. They range from organisational and technical to financial and political reasons, related to the nature, structure and actual context of the Plan document, as well as to the complex set-up of the OIC countries as a group. The Plan of Action suffers from three fundamental shortcomings, which make it more of a declaration of intent than a plan. These

are the absence of a time frame; the absence of specific quantitative targets; and the absence of priority setting. These shortcomings were addressed by setting specific targets such as increasing intra-OIC trade to 20 per cent of the overall trade during the plan period, defining priorities and fixing a time span, which was done through the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action, to be dealt with later in this chapter. Here, I would like to emphasise once again that COMCEC has proved a very effective tool in strengthening and streamlining economic and trade ties among the Member States.

The Ten-Year Programme of Action

As has been explored in this book, the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action identifies ways and means to address many political, intellectual, socio-economic, cultural, scientific and technological challenges facing the OIC Member States. In the development, socio-economic, and scientific and technological fields, the main goal of the Programme is to achieve higher levels of development and prosperity, especially given the abundant economic resources and capacities of the OIC Member States. It assigns priority to enhancing economic cooperation; increasing intra-OIC trade to 20 per cent of overall trade volume during the period covered by the Programme; alleviating poverty in the OIC Member States; supporting development in Africa; solidarity in the face of natural disasters; addressing issues related to higher education, science and technology; the rights of women, youth, children and the family in the Muslim world; and cultural and information exchange among Member States.

Implementation of this programme is currently under way. Special meetings are being held to expedite it. A document, 'The Framework for the Implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action', was prepared to streamline cooperation among the Member States and all the OIC subsidiary organs and specialised and affiliated institutions towards its implementation. The Framework document lists certain necessary activities to be undertaken by the Member States, the OIC General Secretariat and its various OIC institutions. The follow-up of this process is ensured by the fact that its implementation and follow-up form a permanent agenda item for all the major meetings of the OIC: Summits, Councils of Foreign Ministers, and meetings of the Standing Committees, including COMCEC.

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

Full implementation of the Programme, and realisation of its aims within its foreseen time frame through Member States' joint actions, will prepare them to meet and overcome the challenges of the new era, and help attain higher levels of socio-economic development and prosperity. But these goals can only be realised with a firm political will and decisive cooperation and solidarity on the part of the OIC Member States' governments, and close and constructive cooperation among the relevant OIC organs and institutions.

Trade preferential system and efforts to promote intra-OIC trade

The main challenge in the economic field is the low levels of production and income of the OIC Member States. This contrasts starkly with the rich natural and human endowments and high economic potential that Member States have in various fields, including especially vast land, mining, energy (mainly oil and natural gas), agricultural and human resources and financial means.

In the majority of OIC States, it has not yet been possible to exploit inherent economic and commercial potential so as to share reasonable levels in global production and trade. With the exception of a few countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey, most Member States, especially the least developed ones, are still able to export only a limited number of primary commodities (mostly agricultural products and fuel). Those countries could not manage, in general, to shift their production structures from the traditional low-value-added primary products to higher-value-added technology products, and could not increase the competitiveness and productivity of their economies. In other words, they could not keep up with the ongoing process of globalisation and intense competition worldwide. As a result, and thanks to the abundance of funds from surplus countries, they have become consumers of major industrial and emerging countries' goods and services, including food and other agricultural products. This has put a serious limit on their levels of economic growth and development, restricted their contribution to global trade and, accordingly, curbed the possibilities of reaping the benefits thereof; it has also hindered the expansion of intra-OIC trade.

The globalisation process has also generated an environment in which cyclical fluctuations or economic and financial crises can be

transferred more easily across the economies because of the increased interdependencies among them. Many developing countries, including the OIC members, are not immune to such developments. Quite the contrary, their relatively weak and vulnerable economies are more exposed to the unpredictable and capricious behaviour of the international markets and economic crises.

We have witnessed three major crises since the beginning of the rule-based international trading system under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995: the 1997–98 South-East Asian crisis, followed by the Russian Crisis in 1998; the 2001 crisis originating in the US and pulling Europe and others down with it; and the ongoing crisis which originated again in the US in July 2007, with the start of the turmoil in the housing and credit markets, and in mid-2008 dragged in Europe and also Japan, the second largest economy after the US, and spilled over into the rest of the world.

The crisis reached a peak with the failure and bankruptcy of major US financial institutions, in particular the mortgage and investment banks, and eroded the financial stability and reliability of the banking system in the US, Europe and Japan. Now, the slowing down and, in some cases, sharp downturn of industrial activity, decreasing capacity use and even closing of factories, and sudden increases in unemployment figures in these major industrial countries are expected to result in a severe contraction of the world economy and foreign trade. Today's crisis is being defined as the worst of its kind since the Great Depression starting in 1929. Some argue that the entire global financial and monetary system needs to be rebuilt from the bottom up, and a new international financial architecture is needed to replace the old Bretton Woods system.

More pertinent to the OIC is the other problem of the crisis being exported to the emerging economies and the developing countries through falling import demand in developed countries. However, a shift towards exporting to the other emerging economies and developing countries, and/or adopting measures to increase domestic consumption, will certainly help the Muslim countries ease the adverse effects of the current crisis on their economies. Crises pose threats and challenges, but they also present opportunities for those willing to take the advantage.

Under these circumstances, regional integration is certainly one of the most promising instruments to put the economies of the Muslim

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

world on the right track. It is a logical and reliable way to sustainable economic growth and development, and definitely will minimise the costs of globalisation and, in particular, limit the contagion effects of the current crisis. The regional integration of economies—the creation of larger markets—paves the way for large-scale production units, which are needed to meet the augmented demand in the region. In this way, it increases productivity and competitiveness through economies of scale in production of goods already being produced in the region, and also makes the production of new commodities possible within the region. Moreover, providing an intermediary stage for companies and industries at the regional level, it strengthens and prepares them for tougher competitive conditions prevailing at the global market. These factors contribute to income generation within the region.

While the leaders at the Mecca Summit were formulating the provisions of the economic cooperation chapter of the Ten-Year Programme of Action, they instructed COMCEC to promote measures to increase intra-OIC trade and to consider the possibility of establishing a Free Trade Area among the Member States. They also called upon the Member States to sign and ratify all existing OIC trade and economic agreements, and to implement the provisions of the OIC Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation which were aimed at promoting economic and trade cooperation. The Programme had to base itself on the earlier foundations of economic and commercial cooperation efforts, and declared its commitment to a concrete target of raising intra-OIC trade to 20 per cent of the total. This target also coincides with the main priority of COMCEC: promoting intra-OIC economic and trade relations. The major decision by the Mecca Extraordinary Summit on achieving greater economic integration among the Member States was taken when the Framework Agreement on the Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States had already entered into force (in the autumn of 2002) and the trade negotiations amongst the participating countries had started in 2004 under the aegis of COMCEC.

As has been mentioned earlier, in line with the decisions of the First and Second Sessions of COMCEC in 1984 and 1986, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade conducted studies on the possibility of establishing a preferential trade system among the OIC Member States. It had also prepared an initial Framework Agreement for the Establishment of a Trade Preferential System among the Member States of the

OIC. After long and tedious discussions, the Sixth COMCEC Session in 1990 adopted the Framework Agreement and invited the Member States to join it. The Framework Agreement on TPS-OIC is the basic legal document laying down the general principles for establishing a preferential trade system among the Member States, such as the general rules of the negotiations, the scope of the goods coverage, etc. The main features of the Agreement include the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle, equal treatment of Member States, special treatment for the Least Developed Member States, and the possibility of participation in the TPS-OIC trade negotiations with a unified representation of already-established or to-be-established sub-regional and/or regional economic groupings that consist only of OIC Member States.

The TPS-OIC entered into force in the autumn of 2002 after the required number of ratifications. The Nineteenth COMCEC Session in 2003 launched the first round of trade negotiations, which commenced in Turkey in 2004. During the talks held between April 2004 and April 2005, the participating countries focused on setting up a modality for trade negotiations within a specific time-frame and product coverage. The first round was concluded with the drawing-up of the Draft Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Scheme for TPS-OIC (PRETAS). This Protocol was adopted by the Twenty-first Session of COMCEC (Istanbul, 2005). It deals mainly with reducing the tariffs of the products covered under the scheme as well as para-tariff and non-tariff barriers, and sets specific targets and a timetable for tariff reductions. Twelve Member States have so far signed and four have ratified the Protocol.

The Third Extraordinary Summit also declared its strong support for these initiatives under its heading of 'Economic Cooperation', in particular by mandating COMCEC to consider the possibility of a Free Trade Area and assigning priority to the expansion of intra-OIC trade, and setting a time-frame of ten years and a target of raising that trade to 20 per cent of the total (from 15 per cent in 2005). Attaining this target requires not only strong shifts in main trade customer structures of the Member States but also creation of new trade amongst them. We observe an improvement of 0.9 percentage points from 15.2 per cent to 16.1 in 2007, according to the calculations of SESRIC.³

The successful conclusion of the First Round of trade negotiations in 2005, with the adoption of PRETAS, has been a significant landmark in the efforts of the OIC Member States to establish a preferential trade scheme. This was followed by the completion of the Second

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

Round of negotiations in 2007, which produced further formulations on the Rules of Origin and para-tariff and non-tariff measures. TPS-OIC Rules of Origin were adopted by the Twenty-third COMCEC Session in November 2007 and have so far been signed by seven Member States. The date of 1 January 2009 was also set as the deadline for establishing the TPS-OIC and making it operational, which signifies the start of a completely new era in this field for the Member States.

Establishment of a preferential trade system among the Member States (TPS-OIC) heralds the commencement of a very long and thorny journey towards higher levels of integration schemes. In this respect, the lifetime-long struggle and concerted efforts of European countries to establish the European Union must always be kept in mind. It will be recalled that the idea of a European Union was born from the ashes of the Second World War, to end the frequent and bloody wars among European countries. On 9 May 1950, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presented a plan for deeper cooperation, based on which six countries—Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg—signed a treaty on 18 April 1951 to set up the European Coal and Steel Community. At the end of a process taking more than fifty years, the European Economic Community and then the European Union have reached today's maturity.

Economic integration is a time- and energy-consuming process, long and difficult. The road needs to be paved very tediously and carefully. Many constraints, such as the lack of effective means of transport and telecommunications, the lack of direct trade routes between the Member States, infrastructural inadequacies, restrictions of access for businesspersons, insufficient trade financing, the lack of standardisation, market access problems, etc., should be removed. Infrastructural inadequacies—in particular the lack of effective means of transport and telecommunications—constitute the most central and crucial factor.

It is not at all easy for fifty-seven developing countries, spread over four continents, to embark upon a long-term process of establishing an economic integration scheme. The OIC countries are still required to exert a lot of effort to implement and maintain successfully the preferential trade system which is, in fact, the loosest form of any such schemes. In addition to these concerted efforts, the OIC community also supports interaction among the business communities through private sector meetings, and by organising trade and tourism fairs.

The role of the private sector in furthering economic and trade cooperation activities in the Muslim world was emphasised at the Ninth

session of COMCEC, held in Istanbul in September 1993. Since then, the results of the private sector meetings organised regularly by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) have been considered by the COMCEC sessions. These meetings provide a common platform for entrepreneurs and businessmen from the OIC Member States to foster direct contacts and new partnerships among them, discuss areas of mutual cooperation and identify new joint projects, business opportunities and investment areas. So far twelve private sector meetings have been organised successfully, the last of which was held in Kampala on 16–18 June 2008.

The idea of organising Islamic Trade Fairs was first introduced by Turkey; the Tenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Fez in May 1979, accepted an offer by Turkey to host the fair in November 1979 in Istanbul and to hold simultaneously a symposium on trade. Then, following the inception of COMCEC under the Chairmanship of the President of Turkey, the task of organising Islamic Trade Fairs regularly was assigned to the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT). Since then, with few exceptions, Islamic Trade Fairs have been organised biannually with the close cooperation of the ICDT and the host countries. So far twelve Islamic Trade Fairs have been organised successfully with the participation of various companies and enterprises from the Member States. Table 1 shows the list of the Islamic Trade Fairs.

Table 1: *Islamic Trade Fairs*

	Venue	Date
First	Istanbul	18–30 November 1979
Second	Casablanca	5–14 April 1986
Third	Cairo	11–19 October 1988
Fourth	Tunis	5–14 October 1990
Fifth	Tehran	16–21 July 1994
Sixth	Jakarta	22–27 October 1996
Seventh	Tripoli, Lebanon	12–18 October 1998
Eighth	Doha	15–20 October 2000
Ninth	Sharjah	21–26 December 2002
Tenth	Manama	5–9 February 2005
Eleventh	Dakar	21–25 November 2007
Twelfth	Cairo	11–16 October 2009

Efforts to increase intra-OIC trade relations need to be reinforced in various fields, particularly by enhancing intra-OIC investment activities. Effective instruments that could be promoted in order to increase intra-OIC trade include joint venture projects and intra-OIC foreign direct investments and capital movements.

Poverty alleviation and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development

The social and human aspects of the development process have recently gained special importance on the agenda of the international community. It has been agreed that people should be encouraged to participate actively in that process with greater access to better social services, mainly education and health. More investment in people, social services including education and health, and human development leads to a more efficient and productive resource allocation and thus acts as a growth generating mechanism. In fact, social and human development contributes directly to the well-being of people through raising of their living standards. Many developing countries, including the OIC members, have paid special attention to the social and human development process over the last decades. Nevertheless, some of them still have serious handicaps, particularly in relation to poverty; large segments of their populations have insignificant access to the basic social needs and do not possess sufficient material resources to improve their incomes.

Poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with its social, economic, cultural, political aspects. The alleviation of poverty, eradication of famine, action against epidemic diseases and human resource development remain among the major challenges in the developing countries, including the OIC member countries.

Poverty in the OIC countries, as anywhere in the world, is associated with poor economic conditions, poor human resources, poor social services and poor economic and social policies. According to the Human Poverty Index⁴ (HPI) calculated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an average of 30.4 per cent (347.6 million) of the total population in thirty-four OIC countries was suffering poverty in 2000; in 2005 this percentage, with a slight improvement, declined to 29.2 per cent (372.9 million) of the total population in forty-one OIC countries. The figures show that the poverty problem still persists, though an improvement is observed.

The fight against poverty has always been one of the most important agenda items of the OIC and its organs and institutions, and considered as the shared responsibility of all OIC Member States. In this connection, the latest and the strongest commitment came from the Mecca Extraordinary Summit in 2005. That Summit considered it among the main priority issues and decided to establish a special fund for poverty alleviation within the IDB, and commissioned the IDB Board of Governors to set up this fund by creating necessary mechanisms for its financing.

The IDB studied the subject and drew up the draft regulations of the Poverty Alleviation Fund. The IDB's Thirty-second Board of Governors meeting, held in Dakar in 2007, approved establishment of what was named the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development⁵ (ISFD), aiming to have US\$10 billion at its disposal. According to its regulations, the \$10 billion will be used as *Waqf* endowments and the income gained from investment of its resources can be used to finance projects aimed at combating poverty in the member countries. The Fund, created on the basis of voluntary contributions from the Member States, formally started its operations in January 2008. At the end of 2008, 33 Member States announced their contributions amounting to about US\$1.611 billion. Contributions came from Saudi Arabia (\$1 billion), Kuwait (\$300 million), Iran (\$100 million), Qatar (\$50 million) and Algeria (\$50 million). Some least developed Member States in Africa also made pledges, with Sudan and Senegal leading the way (\$15 million and \$10 million respectively). The IDB also decided to contribute US\$1.0 billion over ten years. The Fund will have a special focus on the least developed Member States, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The ISFD Board of Directors meeting in Tehran in February 2008 approved the Fund's first five-year strategy document, which aims at formulating and implementing a number of programmes. Two programmes were highlighted in the first five-year strategy for implementation, the Vocational Literacy Programme (VOLIP) and the Microfinance Support Programme (MSP). These programmes aim at filling the double gap of lack of access to basic education and lack of financing for the poor in the Member States. The cost of each programme is estimated at US\$500 million. It is expected that five million people, mostly women and unemployed young people, will benefit from these initiatives. Additionally, the Board of Directors of the Fund has approved twelve projects with a total ISFD contribution of US\$109

million since its launch in May 2007. With the mobilisation of more resources through increased contributions by the Member States, this Fund will do more towards the realisation of its basic aim of the elimination of poverty in the OIC Member States. To this end, more Member States are expected to contribute to the Fund.

The cotton programme

Since I took office in January 2005, prime importance has been assigned to the socio-economic well-being and development of the African Member States. In this connection, I undertook a tour to six least developed OIC Member States in Africa in March 2005. I visited Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Niger and Senegal to obtain first hand information on the prevailing socio-economic conditions in these countries, and on the efforts being implemented or planned to help them economically and socially. The state of the cotton sector was always placed at the top of our agenda items during this tour; and I agreed with the leaders of these countries on the need, among other steps, to energise the development of cotton sector in this region.

Cotton production is an important economic activity in most of the West African and Central African countries (WCA).⁶ Cotton production amounts to 5–10 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in WCA countries and cotton exports represent around 30 per cent of their total export earnings. Cotton farming in these countries also provides employment for the majority of the rural population. However, despite this significant role of cotton production and exports in those countries, the price of cotton, adjusted for inflation, is tending downward over the long run, according to a study⁷ by the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).⁸ In addition, according to a press release issued by the ICAC on 3 November 2008, cotton prices continued to decline in October 2008 and were lower than in 2007/2008.⁹ The declining price of cotton constitutes a big threat to the sustainable growth and development in cotton producing and exporting developing countries, in particular the African ones. The main reason behind it is the distorting effect of the subsidies to domestic agriculture in the US and the EU. These subsidies, designed to support their cotton producers, encourage higher production and exports and create downward pressure on cotton prices in international markets. This penalises the poor cotton producing countries by drastically reducing their export revenues and causing greater vulnerability in their economies.

The application of any trade distorting policy is certainly against the basic principles of the WTO agreements and the principle of free trade. The developing countries started to express their concerns about such asymmetric applications being practiced by developed countries at the WTO fora. The WTO Ministerial Conference held in Doha in 2001 launched a new round of multilateral trade negotiations that was expected to accommodate such development-related needs and concerns of developing countries. However, high expectations for the Doha Development Round and the following Fifth Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Cancún in Mexico in 2003 were dashed because of the rigid stance of the developed countries, in particular the EU, and the talks in Cancún collapsed without an agreement on the liberalisation of trade in agriculture. The Cancún meeting could have played a key role in helping to reduce considerably the trade imbalance in agriculture. A reduction in agricultural subsides could reduce the number of people living in poverty by raising farm productivity, creating employment and improving rural living standards.

During these negotiations, four cotton-producing African OIC countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali—assumed important leading roles and took the initiative to propose a complete elimination of trade distorting domestic support and export subsidies in the cotton sector. This move is known as the ‘Cotton Initiative’. The proposal also emphasised the damage that subsidies in developed countries cause to African countries. Following the failure of the Cancún meeting, enhancing intra-OIC cooperation for the development of the cotton sector in West African OIC Member States has become a matter of the utmost priority for the cotton producing countries in the region. Meanwhile, the continuing downward trend of cotton prices, at times even below production costs, has ruined small farms and peasants in cotton-producing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. There, in particular, cotton production also faces other impediments such as the lack of input and agricultural equipments, inadequate rural infrastructure and marketing systems, lack of agricultural credit, low levels of agricultural productivity due to the use of traditional production methods, limited irrigation areas, the absence of local processing plants, and the trade in cheap synthetic fibres and textile products and the availability of ready-made clothing, imported mainly from China.

Because of the vital importance of this sector, and its problems whose consideration could not be deferred, I also decided to take up

the matter urgently during my tour of the six African OIC countries in question. In this connection, the OIC General Secretariat organised in cooperation with the Government of Burkina Faso, the IDB and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) a Forum on Energising Trade and Investment in the Cotton Sector of OIC Member States which was held in Ouagadougou on 18–19 April 2005. The main objective was to discuss the ways and means of increasing the value-added in cotton sector in Africa and activating its development, including mechanisms and facilities for financing the cotton industries.

At the end of 2005, the Mecca Summit emphasised, in the introductory part of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action, that special attention needed to be given to Africa, which was the most affected region because of poverty, diseases, illiteracy, famine, and debt burden. They also devoted a special chapter and adopted specific measures to support the development of Africa, including aid for industrialisation, energising trade and investment, transferring technology, alleviating their debt burden and poverty, and eradicating diseases.

Implementation of the measures under this chapter will help the development of the African Muslim countries, in particular, the least developed cotton-producing OIC Member States in the region, and transform their cotton sector into a more productive and competitive one; and, in this manner, better integrate them into the world economy and increase the incomes of farmers. This will also contribute to poverty alleviation, particularly in the least developed OIC Member States.

In this connection, I would like to emphasise that some Member States have also assumed responsibility and taken initiative in various fields to enhance solidarity and further economic cooperation with the African OIC Member States, including Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In particular, Turkey as an experienced cotton producing and manufacturing country assumed a leading role in enhancing economic cooperation in this sector, and hosted several expert group meetings and substantially contributed, in cooperation with the IDB, to the preparation of an Action Plan for developing a cooperation strategy for the OIC's cotton producing countries for the period from 2007 to 2011. This plan aimed at strengthening trade, investment and technology transfer among the cotton producing member countries, particularly to help Africa. The Action Plan assigned priority to enhancing productivity and production techniques; strengthening member countries' structural capacities

and institutions; developing cooperation in the field of processing and marketing; promoting trade and international competitiveness; and arranging finance for these activities. This Action Plan was adopted by the Twenty-second Session of COMCEC, held in Istanbul in 2006.

For implementation of the Five-Year Plan of Action on Cotton, Turkey also organised the Forum on Enhancement and Promotion of Trade and Investment in Cotton Sector among the OIC Member States in Istanbul, on 12–13 November 2007. The Forum identified some research institutions in the following countries as Centres of Excellence in research in cotton and textiles, to represent the groups of African, Asian and Arab countries: in Africa, Nigeria and Senegal; in Asia, Pakistan and Turkey; for the Arab group, Egypt and Syria. The Forum also formed a Steering Committee to finalise the implementation programme of the Plan of Action. A Project Committee was formed under the authority of the Steering Committee, with the task of reviewing the programmes and projects to be submitted by Member States, research centres, the OIC organs and institutions, and regional organisations working in the fields of cotton, textiles and related activities. The Twenty-third Session of COMCEC, held in Istanbul in November 2007, approved the results of the Forum. It is hoped that with the establishment of the necessary institutional framework, we will soon start reaping the fruits of cooperation among the cotton producing and manufacturing countries.

A major joint venture project: Dakar-Port Sudan rail link

Earlier in this chapter I pointed to some constraints, such as the lack of effective means of transport and telecommunications, the lack of direct trade routes between the Member States, infrastructural inadequacies, etc., which hinder intra-OIC economic and trade relations and have big effects of these infrastructural constraints on inter-industry linkage.

Infrastructural investments contribute to economic growth through both supply and demand channels, by reducing costs of production—which increases competitiveness—and setting up linkages among the various economic agents and the various geographical locations of economic activities. In particular, the transport and telecommunications sector has crucial importance: raw materials and intermediary and manufactured products all need to be transported to the consum-

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

ers; services and intangible goods will also be supplied through these activities. The existence and smooth operation of these transport and telecommunications facilities are therefore indispensable and of vital importance for sustainability of the socio-economic growth and development of various regions, countries, and blocs.

The geographical diversity of the OIC countries is considered as a natural constraint for enhancing economic cooperation and integration, and makes it necessary to further develop and expand transport and telecommunications facilities. The inadequacies of such facilities cause traders and other economic agents to pay a higher price, which puts them in a highly disadvantaged position in today's severely competitive global market. Therefore, the development of transport structures is of special importance to the OIC Member States, in particular since most of them are, in general, suppliers of primary commodities which require mass carriage. The case of land-locked countries, especially in Africa, is of concern on account of additional transport costs caused by distance from the nearest seaport.

The Eleventh Islamic Summit (Dakar, March 2008), considered a project proposal initiated by the Sudanese government for a Dakar-Port Sudan rail link and decided to set up a committee comprising the representatives of the OIC General Secretariat, the IDB, and ten African states involved (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and Uganda) to start the project's implementation steps. When implemented, this railway project is expected to play a significant role in generating employment and income opportunities for many people. To implement this project, I convened a meeting of the said Committee in Jeddah in July 2008. In line with the decisions of the meeting, the OIC General Secretariat, in collaboration with the Executive Committee of the Project (comprising Sudan, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, the OIC General Secretariat and IDB) and on the basis of data received from the concerned Member States, prepared a draft project document and circulated it among all concerned countries and institutions. I believe that this project, when implemented, will be a most significant example of joint Islamic action and demonstrate the determination of the member countries to work and succeed collectively.

The Thirty-fifth Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Kampala in December 2008, adopted a resolution on infrastructure development and encouraged all Member States to provide financial support for the

implementation of infrastructure development projects in areas such as transport, information and communications, energy, etc.

Before concluding this section, I would also like to emphasise—because of the significant role of maritime transport in world trade, about 96 per cent of which, in terms of weight, is carried by that means¹⁰—the need to further encourage and facilitate the establishment of joint ventures in the area of shipping and related maritime activities, and to develop direct routes and links among the member countries. In this connection, the Organisation of the Islamic Shipowners Association, an affiliated institution under the OIC umbrella, needs to be further supported and assisted. The creation of harmoniously integrated transport and telecommunications systems in the OIC region is a must for increasing economic and trade relations, and will act as leverage for the success of the regional economic cooperation strategies.

Cooperation in tourism development

Ideas to develop cooperation in the field of tourism were formulated long ago. For example, the 1981 Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation Among the Member States aimed to harmonise the Member States' activities in the fields of transport, communications and tourism. The 1994 Plan of Action also devoted a full chapter to tourism. However, tourism started to draw more attention among Member States in recent years and has become one of the most important areas of cooperation among them. In fact, in line with the technological developments in transport and telecommunications, tourism has become one of the most significant growth industries today, and an important contributor to national income and the balance of payments in many countries. The industry also incorporates other benefits such as contributing to cultural development, enhancing cultural cooperation, promoting social and cultural interactions amongst nations, and serving as a tool for peace, security and dialogue among civilisations. But here I will look at it from the standpoint of economic cooperation under the OIC umbrella.

A number of socio-economic benefits of tourism make it one of the most significant sectors of the economy of a country, especially as it is closely linked with other economic sectors, such as transport, telecommunications, and traditional arts and skills. Apart from being the largest foreign exchange earner in many countries, it is an important job

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

creator as it is a heavily labour intensive sector. The vast majority of tourism jobs are in small and medium-sized enterprises. Also, tourism stimulates investment in new infrastructure as well as investment in restoration of natural environment and historical and cultural monuments. In a significantly large number of cases, tourism jobs and businesses tend to be created in the most underdeveloped regions of a country, and thus help balance economic opportunities throughout the country. In this respect, tourism is also an important instrument for increasing the income of the population, improving the living conditions of the people and combating poverty. Therefore, it has tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable development, particularly in developing countries.

All this easily explains why the OIC Member States have shown great interest in recent years in increased tourism development and cooperation among themselves. Since the convening of the First Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers, in Isfahan in 2000, the OIC tourism ministers met six times, the last meeting being held in Damascus in July 2008. The Sixth Conference of Tourism Ministers adopted the document entitled 'Framework for Development and Cooperation in the Domain of Tourism between the OIC Member States', which was initially drafted and titled as the 'Strategic Plan for Development of Tourism in the OIC Member States' by the Second Experts Group Meeting on Tourism Development, held in 2007 in Istanbul. This document was later endorsed by the Twenty-fourth Session of COM-CEC, in Istanbul, in 2008. The Framework aims, *inter alia*, to substantially develop tourist visits to the Member States from non-members, identify ways and means to reinforce tourism cooperation among Member States, create an appropriate environment for implementing and establishing investment projects in the OIC Member States, and support the efforts to promote regional development projects in the field of tourism. A good example of such regional enterprises is the project entitled 'Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa', to which the OIC Member States have extended full support; this is being undertaken by nine West African OIC member countries: Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Its objectives are sustainable development of tourism in the region; poverty alleviation in these countries; and the protection of the environment. The World Tourism Organisation, the ST-EP Founda-

tion (ST-EP: Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty) and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) supported this project and agreed to finance the feasibility study for it at the total cost of US\$425,000. The project was also endorsed by the Twenty-fourth Session of COMCEC in October 2008. It is being followed by a special project committee and by COMCEC.

COMCEC regularly reviews, through its Sessional Committee, the progress made towards the implementation of another important tourism-related project, 'Technical Cooperation in the Field of Heritage Preservation', proposed by Jordan and conducted by the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture in Istanbul. IRCICA develops programmes that contribute to tourism development and cooperation in the Member States related to preservation and promotion of cultural and artistic heritage. It also developed a website on heritage sites in the OIC Member States.

Tourism fairs are among the most significant tools for the promotion and marketing of various tourism products and related services. The Second Conference of Tourism Ministers, held in Malaysia in 2001, asked ICDT to organise tourism fairs for the OIC member countries. The Eighteenth Session of COMCEC, held in Istanbul in 2002, also took a decision in the same direction. The First Tourism Fair of the OIC Member States was then organised jointly by ICDT and the concerned institutions of Turkey, the Turkish Association of Travel Agencies (TURSAB) and the Exhibition Centre of Istanbul (CNR), in Istanbul in 2005. The OIC has intensified its efforts to promote the tourism sector and coordinate cooperation in this field.

ANNEX

STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES

Table 1: Basic Indicators

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population (Million), 2007</i>	<i>Population Growth Rate (%) (Average 2003-07)</i>	<i>GDP, 2007 (Current, Billion \$)</i>	<i>GDP Per Capita (\$), 2007</i>
Afghanistan	27.4	3.8	9.4	341
Albania	3.2	0.5	10.7	3,369
Algeria	33.9	1.5	132.5	3,913
Azerbaijan	8.5	0.9	31.3	3,652
Bahrain	0.8	2.0	19.7	26,122
Bangladesh	158.6	1.8	67.9	428
Benin	9.0	3.2	5.6	618
Brunei	0.4	2.2	12.4	31,825
Burkina Faso	14.8	3.1	7.1	483
Cameroon	18.5	2.2	20.6	1,112
Chad	10.8	3.3	7.5	693
Comoros	0.6	2.2	0.5	743
Cote d'Ivoire	19.3	1.7	20.7	1,072
Djibouti	0.8	1.8	0.8	1,002
Egypt	75.5	1.8	133.6	1,770
Gabon	1.3	1.6	11.3	8,484
Gambia	1.7	2.9	0.6	377
Guinea	9.4	1.9	4.2	451
Guinea-Bissau	1.7	3.0	0.4	211
Guyana	0.7	0.1	1.1	1,433
Indonesia	225.7	1.3	432.9	1,918
Iran	71.0	1.5	289.8	4,082

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Iraq	29.6	3.0 ^a	69.7	2,356
Jordan	5.7	2.5	15.7	2,750
Kazakhstan	15.5	0.8	104.1	6,726
Kuwait	2.7	2.6	110.0	41,300
Kyrgyzstan	5.2	1.0	3.8	715
Lebanon	4.1	1.1	24.6	6,014
Libya	6.2	2.0	62.1	10,080
Malaysia	26.6	1.8	186.7	7,033
Maldives	0.3	1.6	1.1	3,456
Mali	12.3	3.0	6.8	555
Mauritania	3.0	2.7	2.7	875
Morocco	30.9	1.1	73.4	2,389
Mozambique	21.4	2.2	7.8	363
Niger	14.2	3.5	4.1	289
Nigeria	148.0	2.4	173.2	1,170
Oman	2.6	1.2	40.3	15,519
Pakistan	162.5	2.3	163.3	1005
Palestine	3.71	3.4	5.5	1,472
Qatar	0.9	3.9	63.9	76,391
Saudi Arabia	24.2	2.3	377.3	15,481
Senegal	12.4	2.6	11.2	906
Sierra Leone	5.9	3.4	1.9	331
Somalia	8.7	3.0	2.5	291
Sudan	38.6	2.0	55.7	1,443
Suriname	0.5	0.6	2.1	4,466
Syria	19.9	2.7	37.5	1,887
Tajikistan	6.7	1.3	3.7	555
Togo	6.5	2.7	2.5	386
Tunisia	10.2	0.9	35.0	3,424
Turkey	70.5	1.2	649.1	9,196
Turkmenistan	5.0	1.4	26.2	5,279
Uganda	30.9	3.3	12.4	403
United Arab Emirates	4.3	3.8	191.5	43,866
Uzbekistan	26.9	1.2	19.3	717
Yemen	22.4	3.0	21.7	968
OIC Total^b	1,482.6	2.1	3,788.9	2,556
World	6,597.5	1.3	54,848.9	8,314
Developed Countries	999.5	0.6	39,542.3	39,561
Developing Countries	5,598.0	1.4	15,306.6	2,734

Source: SESRIC, BASEIND Database; IMF, WEO Database.

Notes: a. Average of 2005–2007; b. For any indicator, the sum of the values in the table may not be exactly equal to the OIC Total owing to rounding.

Table 2: Merchandise Trade, 2007

ANNEX

	Total Exports (X)	Total Imports (M)	Intra-OIC Exports (Million \$)	(% of X)	Intra-OIC Imports (Million \$)	(% of M)	Intra-OIC Trade (%)
Afghanistan	328	4,825	124	37.7	2,567	53.2	52.2
Albania	976	3,730	26	2.7	366	9.8	8.3
Algeria	57,050	32,443	3,594	6.3	3,309	10.2	7.7
Azerbaijan	13,627	7,870	1,213	8.9	2,015	25.6	15.0
Bahrain	23,916	10,406	3,037	12.7	4,964	47.7	23.3
Bangladesh	12,639	18,476	543	4.3	3,769	20.4	13.9
Benin	415	4,869	153	36.8	696	14.3	16.1
Brunei	7,361	3,934	1,789	24.3	507	12.9	20.3
Burkina Faso	470	1,578	85	18.1	671	42.5	36.9
Cameroon	4,932	3,605	454	9.2	862	23.9	15.4
Chad	2,340	727	16	0.7	211	29.0	7.4
Comoros	30	161	13	43.0	40	25.1	27.9
Côte d'Ivoire	8,318	6,413	2,537	30.5	2,424	37.8	33.7
Djibouti	423	1,919	311	73.6	681	35.5	42.4
Egypt	23,440	49,981	6,399	27.3	7,397	14.8	18.8
Gabon	6,266	2,732	551	8.8	281	10.3	9.3
Gambia	46	853	3	5.6	307	36.0	34.4
Guinea	1,766	2,891	108	6.1	324	11.2	9.3
Guinea-Bissau	164	244	34	20.9	71	29.0	25.7
Guyana	809	1,032	12	1.5	33	3.2	2.5

Table 2 continued

	Total Exports (Million \$) (X)	Total Imports (Million \$) (M)	Intra-OIC Exports (Million \$) (% of X)	Intra-OIC Exports (Million \$) (% of M)	Intra-OIC Imports (Million \$) (% of M)	Intra-OIC Trade (%)
Iran	81,706	55,917	10,867	13.3	14,483	25.9
Iraq	28,112	15,868	1,546	5.5	9,378	59.1
Jordan	5,534	13,531	2,618	47.3	5,209	38.5
Kazakhstan	37,568	36,339	4,020	10.7	2,253	6.2
Kuwait	47,099	20,940	7,395	15.7	4,230	20.2
Kyrgyzstan	877	5,657	480	54.7	560	9.9
Lebanon	3,329	12,955	2,350	70.6	3,861	29.8
Libya	43,674	13,043	2,533	5.8	2,504	19.2
Malaysia	176,207	146,982	15,330	8.7	12,346	8.4
Maldives	172	1,144	16	9.1	364	31.8
Mali	235	2,841	55	23.2	813	28.6
Mauritania	1,687	1,820	206	12.2	284	15.6
Morocco	15,839	32,248	1,362	8.6	5,579	17.3
Mozambique	2,721	3,758	46	1.7	222	5.9
Niger	435	1,116	113	26.0	366	32.8
Nigeria	58,924	38,014	4,066	6.9	2,737	7.2
Oman	24,387	15,659	4,292	17.6	4,729	30.2
Pakistan	19,388	39,486	6,437	33.2	14,847	37.6
Palestine	—	—	—	—	—	—
Qatar	30,916	21,696	2,659	8.6	4,035	18.6

ANNEX

Saudi Arabia	199,610	91,341	33,934	17.0	12,148	13.3	15.8
Senegal	1,716	4,981	752	43.8	648	13.0	20.9
Sierra Leone	266	691	7	2.5	170	24.6	18.5
Somalia	380	972	272	71.6	508	52.3	57.7
Sudan	8,754	8,739	481	5.5	2,429	27.8	16.6
Suriname	1,410	1,236	133	9.4	21	1.7	5.8
Syria	14,540	23,195	9,873	67.9	10,902	47.0	55.1
Tajikistan	992	2,521	688	69.4	981	38.9	47.5
Togo	700	4,112	291	41.6	411	10.0	14.6
Tunisia	14,834	19,866	1,854	12.5	2,324	11.7	12.0
Turkey	107,113	169,986	20,244	18.9	21,588	12.7	15.1
Turkmenistan	7,727	3,514	2,411	31.2	1,392	39.6	33.8
Uganda	849	2,832	99	11.7	326	11.5	11.5
United Arab Emirates	126,136	145,383	23,335	18.5	20,499	14.1	16.1
Uzbekistan	6,046	5,884	1,808	29.9	894	15.2	22.6
Yemen	7,162	9,230	974	13.6	3,867	41.9	29.5
OIC Total Developing Countries	1,356,459	1,206,659	197,327	14.5	216,010	17.9	16.1
World	13,818,100	14,369,600					

Source: SESRIC, BASEIND Database; IMF, Direction of Trade Statistics.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Table 3: *Selected Tourism Indicators, 2007*

	Int. Tourist Arrivals (Thousands)	Int. Tourism Receipts (Million \$)	Intra-OIC Tourist Arrivals (Thousands)	Intra-OIC Arrivals (% of Total Arrivals)
Albania	1,127	1,371	23.6	2.1
Algeria	1,743	215 ^a	170.4	9.8
Azerbaijan	1,333	178	331.2	24.8
Bahrain	7,826	1,105	5,623.6	71.9
Bangladesh	289	76	28.8	10.0
Benin*	1,010	118	94.9	9.4
Brunei	877	224 ^a	711.3	81.1
Burkina Faso*	289	53 ^a	81.4	28.2
Cameroon*	185 ^a	158 ^c	3.5 ^a	1.9
Chad*	59 ^b	15 ^g	0.8	1.3
Comoros	29 ^a	27 ^a	—	—
Cote d'Ivoire	20 ^g	104	—	—
Djibouti	40	9 ^a	—	—
Egypt	11,091	9,480	2,154.3	19.4
Gabon	234 ^d	15 ^d	—	—
Gambia	613 ^a	75	—	—
Guinea*	47 ^a	70 ^a	17.2 ^a	36.7
Guinea-Bissau*	30	3 ^a	11.5	38.4
Guyana	131	50	—	—
Indonesia*	5,506	5,346	776.3 ^a	14.1
Iran	2,735 ^a	1,486	—	—
Jordan	6,529	2,312	5,065.6	77.6
Kazakhstan	5,311	1,013	3,387.4	63.8
Kuwait	3,899 ^a	223	2,753.4 ^a	70.6
Kyrgyzstan*	766 ^a	346	606.3 ^a	79.1
Lebanon*	1,017	4,993	509.3	50.1
Libya	999 ^c	190 ^a	943.2 ^c	94.4
Malaysia*	28,325	12,905	3,431.4	12.1
Maldives*	676	494	18.7	2.8
Mali	164	175 ^a	—	—
Morocco*	6,777 ^a	7,162	282.1 ^a	4.2
Mozambique	1,095 ^a	163	—	—
Niger	60 ^a	36 ^a	—	—
Nigeria	3,056 ^a	21 ^a	1,950.9 ^a	63.8
Oman*	1,407 ^c	538 ^a	224.2	15.9
Pakistan*	840	276	156.9	18.7
Palestine	264	121 ^b	—	—

ANNEX

Qatar	964	874 ^a	-	-
Saudi Arabia*	13,479	5,224	9,808.6	72.8
Senegal*	876 ^a	250 ^a	358.6 ^a	40.9
Sierra Leone	32	18	-	-
Sudan	328 ^a	262	-	-
Suriname*	163	67	1.4 ^c	0.9
Syria	6,004	2,025 ^a	5,579.3	92.9
Tajikistan	3,907 ^g	3	-	-
Togo*	86	21 ^a	23.1	26.9
Tunisia	7,176 ^a	2,575	2,505.5 ^a	34.9
Turkey	23,341	18,487	2,927.0	12.5
Turkmenistan*	8	-	2.4	29.6
Uganda*	642	356	17.7	2.8
United Arab Emirates	7,126 ^b	4,972 ^a	2,133.7 ^c	29.9
Uzbekistan	281 ^a	43 ^a	-	-
Yemen*	379	181 ^a	296.1	78.1
OIC Total	161,191	86,504	53,012	32.9

Source: SESRIC, BASEIND Database; World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

Notes: a. 2006, b. 2005, c. 2004, d. 2003, e. 2002, f. 2001, g. 2000.

*Figures for Intra-OIC tourism refer to number of tourists at national borders, not number of visitors.

Table 4: Selected Education Indicators, 2007

	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Primary Schools (Net, %)	Secondary Schools (Net, %)	Tertiary Schools (Gross, %)	Internet users per 100 people
Afghanistan	28.0 ^g	-	25.91	1.25 ^c	1.82
Albania	99.0	93.62 ^c	72.82 ^c	19.09 ^c	14.86 ^a
Algeria	75.4	95.35	66.34 ^c	24.02	10.34
Azerbaijan	99.4	95.31	83.02	15.24	10.83
Bahrain	88.8	98.24 ^b	93.39 ^a	32.05 ^a	33.21
Bangladesh	53.5	86.53 ^a	40.74 ^a	7.25	0.32
Benin	40.5	80.17 ^a	17.11 ^f	5.11 ^a	1.66
Brunei	94.9	92.84	89.13	15.37	41.69 ^a
Burkina Faso	28.7	58.15 ⁱ	14.11 ⁱ	3.05 ⁱ	0.56 ^a
Cameroon	67.9 ^f	-	-	7.15	2.04 ^a
Chad	25.7 ^g	60.22 ^d	10.43 ^d	1.16 ^b	0.57 ^a
Comoros	75.1	55.06 ^g	-	2.27 ^c	3.42 ^a

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Cote d'Ivoire	48.7 ^e	54.93 ^d	19.84 ^e	7.89	1.59 ^a
Djibouti	-	45.30 ⁱ	24.39 ⁱ	2.63	1.34 ^a
Egypt	72.0	95.75	80.04 ^e	34.75 ^b	13.96
Gabon	86.2	87.99 ^f	-	-	6.16
Gambia	-	66.53 ⁱ	40.07 ⁱ	1.15 ^c	5.87
Guinea	29.5 ^d	73.64	30.06	5.29 ^a	0.54 ^a
Guinea-Bissau	64.6	45.15 ^f	8.67 ^f	-	2.25 ^a
Guyana	-	-	-	12.32	25.73
Indonesia	91.4	94.83	67.54	17.46	5.76
Iran	84.7	93.58 ^a	77.25 ^b	31.39	32.38
Iraq	74.1 ^g	88.61 ^b	38.37 ^b	15.79 ^b	0.93
Jordan	93.1	88.57	86.64	39.91	19.70
Kazakhstan	99.6	90.32 ⁱ	85.56 ⁱ	47.01 ⁱ	12.27
Kuwait	93.9	88.19	79.88	17.56 ^a	33.80
Kyrgyzstan	99.3	84.49	80.55	42.80	14.33
Lebanon	-	83.22 ⁱ	73.50 ⁱ	54.06 ⁱ	38.32
Libya	86.8	-	-	55.75 ^d	4.31 ^a
Malaysia	91.9	97.45 ^a	68.73 ^b	30.24 ^a	55.72
Maldives	97.0	96.34	69.00	-	10.81
Mali	23.3	63.02	-	4.42	0.81
Mauritania	55.8	80.44	16.77	3.97	0.99 ^a
Morocco	55.6	88.85	34.51 ^d	11.31	21.39
Mozambique	44.4	76.05 ^a	2.55	1.46 ^b	0.94
Niger	30.4	43.89	9.01	1.04	0.29 ^a
Nigeria	72.0	63.81 ^a	27.00 ^a	10.15 ^b	6.76
Oman	84.4	72.66	78.60	25.49	13.08
Pakistan	54.9	65.62 ^a	32.23	5.12	10.77
Palestine	92.8	73.33	88.55	46.16	9.59
Qatar	90.2	93.02	92.60	15.93	41.98
Saudi Arabia	85.0	84.63	73.02	30.24 ^a	25.62
Senegal	42.6	71.92	22.21	7.72 ⁱ	6.61
Sierra Leone	38.1	-	22.82	2.12 ^e	0.22
Somalia	-	-	9.82 ^f	-	1.13
Sudan	60.9 ^g	41.15 ^g	-	6.19 ^g	9.08
Suriname	90.4	94.14	67.72 ^b	12.43 ^e	9.61
Syria	83.1	94.51 ^e	65.71	-	17.45
Tajikistan	99.6	97.20	81.33	19.75	7.18
Togo	53.2 ^g	77.23	22.20 ^g	5.20	4.99 ^a
Tunisia	77.7	95.05	64.45 ^d	30.81	16.84
Turkey	88.7	92.34	69.47	36.30	16.45
Turkmenistan	99.5	-	-	-	1.41
Uganda	73.6	94.61	18.89	3.47 ^c	2.51 ^a
United Arab Emirates	90.4	90.88	82.61	22.85 ⁱ	51.78

ANNEX

Uzbekistan	96.9 ^g	90.96	91.74	9.80	4.47
Yemen	58.9	75.18 ^a	37.42 ^b	9.39 ^a	1.43

Source: SESRIC, BASEIND Database.

Notes: i. 2008, a. 2006, b. 2005, c. 2004, d. 2003, e. 2002, f. 2001, g. 2000.

Table 5: Science and Technology Indicators

	Number of Articles Published 2008	Number of Articles Published 2004–2008	Number of Cited Articles 2004–2008	R&D Expend- iture as % of GDP (Average of 2000–2006)
Afghanistan	23	59	36	—
Albania	50	168	107	—
Algeria	1,166	4,218	2,221	0.20
Azerbaijan	288	1,171	449	0.30
Bahrain	107	480	268	—
Bangladesh	729	2,895	1,774	—
Benin	302	1,064	564	—
Brunei	46	174	115	0.02
Burkina Faso	173	696	493	0.24
Cameroon	459	1,831	1,153	—
Chad	15	81	61	—
Comoros	3	18	11	—
Cote d'Ivoire	165	659	399	—
Djibouti	2	13	10	—
Egypt	3,800	15,627	9,454	0.19
Gabon	82	348	265	—
Gambia	66	337	301	—
Guinea	13	81	58	—
Guinea-Bissau	17	99	85	—
Guyana	16	80	41	—
Indonesia	661	2,794	1,850	0.06
Iran	10,550	32,586	18,383	0.59
Iraq	182	606	295	—
Jordan	1,165	4,566	2,664	0.34
Kazakhstan	211	967	441	0.24
Kuwait	619	2,712	1,582	0.16
Kyrgyzstan	54	204	84	0.19
Lebanon	1,064	4,452	3,238	—
Libya	91	381	184	—
Malaysia	2,671	9,072	5,245	0.59

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Maldives	1	11	8	-
Mali	88	386	302	-
Mauritania	13	85	48	-
Morocco	1,074	4,664	2,646	0.60
Mozambique	78	306	219	0.50
Niger	95	311	165	-
Nigeria	1,940	6,498	2,880	-
Oman	294	1,336	763	-
Pakistan	2,889	8,556	4,367	0.24
Palestine	87	425	237	-
Qatar	192	664	371	-
Saudi Arabia	1,718	7,090	3,931	-
Senegal	216	986	646	0.09
Sierra Leone	14	40	17	-
Somalia	6	16	11	-
Sudan	154	622	382	0.37
Suriname	6	44	34	-
Syria	198	804	467	-
Tajikistan	45	171	63	0.08
Togo	43	190	102	-
Tunisia	1,872	6,720	3,654	0.73
Turkey	17,849	73,484	44,002	0.69
Turkmenistan	4	23	13	-
Uganda	355	1,524	1,089	0.28
United Arab Emirates	644	2,720	1,670	-
Uzbekistan	283	1,382	681	-
Yemen	61	241	140	-

Source: SESRIC; ISI Web of Science; World Bank, WDI Online.

EPILOGUE

Reform at the OIC is an ongoing process. The significant changes introduced in the last five years have opened new horizons for the Organisation. Most notable amongst these was the Ten-Year Programme of Action begun within the first year of this period. It defined a set of important objectives within the general framework of achieving development and prosperity in the Member States and contributing to peace and cooperation throughout the world. The Programme set a new vision that calls for greater solidarity amongst the Member States in defence of their common causes, and is founded on an expanded range of joint Islamic action. Taking these aspects into consideration, the Programme was launched under the motto 'Solidarity in Action', a term which best reflects this new vision and the action-oriented approaches it requires. Accordingly, the General Secretariat as the chief executive office devised ways and means to increase efficiency and transparency in the work involving internal reforms at institutional and administrative levels, as well as revisions and innovations in the methods of addressing international issues. The new procedures already instituted are proving effective.

The adoption of a new Charter was another historic and important change achieved during this period. It demonstrated the Member States' conviction of the need for redefinition of the OIC's outlook in view of modern requirements and current challenges. The Charter addresses issues that concern the Muslim world and its participation in global affairs. The adoption of both the new Charter and the new Programme of Action in this period represents a reform of unprecedented significance for the OIC. The experience of this process has proved that when the OIC apparatus shows determination and pro-

poses initiatives in setting goals and following them up, the Member States will deploy the political will necessary for achieving the now reformulated and reaffirmed objectives. To be capable of dealing with the diverse problems it faces, including political crises and problems of underdevelopment and social turbulence, the Muslim world indeed has to divert more energy to socio-economic development.

As part of this process, a number of new subjects have been included in the OIC's agenda, some addressing emerging needs and concerns, others aiming to modernise existing practices by introducing methods newly developed in international policy or previously not used in the OIC framework. An example of the former is the strategies of action we launched to deal with the problem of hatred and ridicule directed against the sacred values of Muslims in some European media outlets in recent years, as detailed in the chapter on Islamophobia. An example of the latter group of additions to the OIC's agenda is the introduction of new targets into the development objectives for promoting science and technology and accelerating industrialisation in the Member States. The enlargement of the OIC's networking schemes to reach civil society and media institutions, and the encouragement of consultations with NGOs, are examples of the policies and measures currently being developed by international organisations and also introduced into OIC practice. In addition, several new techniques have been applied to speed up and improve the internal decision-making and implementation processes in the OIC. These developments have been reviewed in detail in the different chapters of this book.

To summarise, considerable progress has been made towards realising the OIC's internal agenda, whilst at the same time, voicing the demands and strengthening the position of Muslim nations within the world community. The challenge here is to translate the decisions taken and policies defined at the Member States' Summit and Ministerial Conferences into real action. As in other international organisations, intensive and concerted efforts are needed at diplomatic and bureaucratic levels in order to ensure that the policies defined are assimilated and effectively applied.

Such a process has also brought the Muslim world to a point where it is asserting a stronger consciousness of its capacities to solve Member States' diverse problems and at the same time being able to acquire a greater say in world politics within the current processes of shifting world power balances. At the time of writing, four Muslim countries

EPILOGUE

are non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. It is hoped that when the time comes for a revision of the Security Council's structure within the forthcoming UN reform, the Muslim world will acquire a permanent seat on the Council. This can contribute significantly to world peace and the OIC, as the representative of the one and half billion-strong Muslim world, is most likely to assume a key role in this process. Meanwhile, one factor that has helped to increase the importance of the OIC recently is that three of its Member States—Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey—are included among the G-20 countries.

The ongoing reform process has already yielded results in many areas within a short span of five years. Of great importance is the noticeable improvement in the Organisation's image within and beyond the Muslim world, which is in great part due to the pro-active policies carried out in various areas. The Member States' wholehearted and wide-ranging support of the new Charter and the new Programme of Action are evidence of the confidence placed in the OIC reform. Their interest and participation in the continuing and the newly launched trade and development schemes and poverty and disaster relief projects, among others, indicate their active engagement in OIC activities. A revival of interest on the part of the Member States is also observable in OIC fora at various levels. In this context, the former Soviet Republics which joined the OIC in the 1990s after gaining independence, have now become active participants in the Organisation's work. Greater and more diverse participation of Member States throughout the Muslim world in OIC activities is ensured through implementation of various regional development projects and entry into force of international agreements on cooperation schemes.

In the implementation of its new vision, the OIC faces two imminent challenges. The first is to complete within the OIC the institutional and legal bases in the field of human rights, to ensure respect for and promotion of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The creation of institutional capacity in preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping is the other crucial challenge.

Within the reform process in the OIC, these two areas were stipulated among the Organisation's priorities by the Ten Year Programme of Action adopted in 2005 and the new Charter adopted in 2008, together with intergovernmental deliberation that was initiated regarding both areas in 2009. Naturally, the establishment of a permanent

and independent human rights commission and increased and institutionalised capacity in preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peacekeeping would be important, as they would demonstrate visible results of the reform process and would certainly boost further the visibility and credibility of the OIC in the international arena.

It is foreseen that the Intergovernmental Expert Group on the establishment of the Human Rights Commission will finalise its work during 2010. We sincerely hope that the prospective Commission will complement the work of the international human rights mechanisms and contribute to bringing the human rights standards in the Muslim world to the levels enjoyed in those countries where the field of human rights is developed.

A wider process of deliberation and negotiation has thus been ushered in, to enable the OIC to be more active and better equipped in the areas of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peacekeeping. This process began with the submission of a concept paper prepared by the OIC General Secretariat to a special brainstorming session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Damascus in May 2009. Considering that most of the important international conflicts and crises are concentrated on or involve OIC Member States, it was seen as urgently necessary to increase institutional capacity and devise new mechanisms within the OIC to deal with these matters in cooperation with the international community, during the elaboration of the new vision of the OIC. The heavy toll of many long lasting conflicts within the OIC area renders this task urgent and compelling.

As with other intergovernmental bodies, achievement of the new tasks within the OIC and translation of its new vision into concrete action will certainly depend on the success of efforts to bridge the gap between the Member States' political will and intergovernmental diplomatic activity.

The period under review also saw important developments indicating acknowledgement of the OIC's relevance by states and organisations around the world. Hence the growing interest of major countries in being associated in different capacities with the OIC. The Russian Federation applied for and acquired the status of Observer at the OIC. Cooperation between the OIC Member States on the one hand and on the other the Russian Federation with its twenty-million-strong Muslim communities—including the Muslim populations of the Republics within it—promises to be beneficial in various areas of economic, com-

EPILOGUE

mercial and cultural exchanges. Another indication of the interest shown in the OIC was the US President's appointing a Special Envoy to the OIC in 2008, to develop cooperation between the Organisation and the USA in various developmental fields.

The reform and renewal project has thus made a successful departure. The author saw in the manner of his election to office by vote a significant point of departure and an unprecedented mandate for the office and the person. It entrusted me with the honour of introducing reforms in the Organisation to encourage it to develop and adopt strategies for the future, which would make the OIC a more effective instrument in initiating and coordinating the joint action of Member States so that they come to have a say in world affairs commensurate with their size and weight in terms of economy, politics and culture.

With this moral capital, the General Secretariat will continue to endeavour with devotion and commitment to serve the goals and aspirations of the Member States and strengthen the status of the OIC on behalf of the Muslim world.

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8. Saad Khan, *Reasserting International Islam: A Focus on the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and Other Islamic Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 13.
9. Mohammed el-Sayed Selim (Ed.), *The OIC in A Changing World* (Cairo University, 1994), p. 15.
10. Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
11. Motamar Al-Alam Al-Islami (World Muslim Congress) <www.motamar-alalamislami.org>.
12. Noor Ahmad Baba, *OIC: Theory and Practice of Pan-Islamic Cooperation* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1994), p. 32.
13. Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
14. Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, ‘Globalisation, Multi-lateralism and the Islamic World’, IslamOnline <http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-Living_Shariah%2FLSELayout&cid=1158658490915>.
15. Islamic religious occasions depend on the Islamic lunar calendar, with many Islamic traditions stipulating that the actual sighting of the Moon

will mark the end or beginning of a religious festival, such as Eid. This has often led to the celebration of common festivals on different days across the world.

16. Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
17. Naveed S. Sheikh, *The New Politics of Islam: Pan-Islamic Foreign Policy in A World of States* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 34.
18. For the Summit's Final Communiqué: <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/1/DecReport-1st%20IS.htm>>.

2. THE OIC FROM 1969–2004: FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION

1. 21.4% of world population in 2007 and 22.1% in 2008. The total population of OIC Member States in 2008 is estimated at 1,468.1 million (computed from SESRIC, BASEIND Database).
2. Baba, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
3. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/1/DecReport-1st%20IS.htm>>.
4. Ibid.
5. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/All%20Download/Frm.01.htm>>.
6. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/All%20Download/Frm.03.htm#RESOLUTION%20No.%207/3>>.
7. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/2/2nd-is-sum.htm#1>>.
8. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/All%20Download/Frm.07.htm#ECONOMIC,%20CULTURAL%20AND%20SOCIAL%20RESOLUTIONS>>.
9. OIC, <[http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/3/3rd-is-sum\(economical\).htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/3/3rd-is-sum(economical).htm)>.
10. OIC, <[http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/3/3rd-is-sum\(cultural\).htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/3/3rd-is-sum(cultural).htm)>.
11. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/3/3rd-is-sum.htm>>.
12. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/18/18%20icfm-admin-en.htm#RESOLUTION%20No.%206/18-AF>>.
13. An Annual Coordination Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States is held every year at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York, to follow up the implementation of the decisions of the CFM.
14. Information on all subsidiary and specialised organs and affiliated institutions of the OIC is available on the website <<http://www.oic-oci.org>>.
15. Resolution: 23/11-C. <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/11/11%20icfm-cultural-en.htm#RESOLUTION%20No.%2023/11-C>>.
16. The acronym of the Centre was changed from SESRTCIC to SESRIC by the decision of the Board of Directors of the Centre at its Twenty-ninth Meeting, held on 10–11 September 2007 in Ankara, approved by the Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference held in Dakar on 13–14 March 2008.

17. Islamic Development Bank, <<http://www.isdb.org>>.
18. A unit of account of the IDB which is equivalent to one Special Drawing Right (SDR) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

3. REFORM HISTORY

1. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/15/15%20icfm-admin-en.htm#RESOLUTION%20NO:%2014/15-AF>>.
2. SIPA Study on Coordination within the Framework of the OIC, unpublished internal OIC document.
3. Later this article was amended to read ‘within the framework of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference’ <<http://www.isesco.org.ma/english/charter/charter.php?page=/Home/Charter>>; other amendments were also brought. For example, according to the original charter, three of the subsidiary organs of the OIC were represented on the Executive Council of ISESCO (which was, among other things, an efficient mechanism of coordination); again, according to the original charter, the Secretary General of the OIC, in his personal capacity, could appoint three specialists known for their work to the Executive Council of ISESCO. In the course of time these and some other provisions were canceled.
4. ‘Decision on coordination between organizations and institutions operating in the fields of education, science and culture within the framework of the OIC system’ (Decision no. CG 3/88/C) taken by the General Conference of ISESCO at its Third Session (1988).
5. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/7/7th-is-summit.htm#FINAL COMMUNIQUE>>.
6. Report of the Eminent Persons Group (Jeddah: unpublished internal OIC document, 1995), p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
8. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/8/8th-is-ummits.htm#FINAL %20COMMUNIQUE>>.
9. The Group held four meetings in the years 1998–2000. The meetings were held in Jeddah in February 1998, February 2000, April 2001 and December 2002.
10. Accenture is a global consultancy firm selected under the supervision of the Malaysian Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) to prepare and conduct a study on restructuring the OIC General Secretariat.
11. OIC, <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/is/9/9th-is-sum-administrative.htm>>.
12. ‘Report of the General Secretariat of the OIC submitted to the Open-Ended Meeting of Intergovernmental Experts Group on the OIC Restructuring to Meet the Challenges of the New Millennium’ (Jeddah: unpublished internal OIC document, April 2005).

4. REFORM AND RENEWAL, AND REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

1. The text of the Inaugural Statement is in Appendix 2.
2. The text of the 'Ten-Year Programme of Action to Meet the Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah in the 21st Century' is in Appendix 3.
3. The text of the Charter is in Appendix 4.
4. The group consisted of: the Secretary General of the OIC (Chairperson), Sheikh Mohamed Ali Tashkhiri from Iran, Prof. Mohamed Salim Al-Awa from Egypt, Dr Abdussalam Al-Abbad from Jordan, Justice Taqiuddin Usmani from Pakistan, Dr Abdul Kabir Al-Madghari from Morocco, and Sheikh Dr Habib Belkhodja, then Secretary General of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy.

5. THE OIC'S ROLE IN PROMOTION OF PEACE AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

1. The OIC's areas of current concern and action are fully reflected in the agendas of the Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference (Dakar, 13–14 March 2008) and the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (Damascus, 23–25 May 2009) (Appendices 8 and 9).
2. UK Government Report, *Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the year 1931*, 1931.
3. El Salvador and Costa Rica shifted their embassies back to Tel Aviv in August 2006.
4. Putrajaya Declaration on the Situation in Occupied Palestinian Territories, Extended Meeting of the OIC, 3 August 2006.
5. UNSC Resolution 1546, para-4: '*Endorses* the proposed timetable for Iraq's political transition to democratic government including:
 - (a) formation of the sovereign Interim Government of Iraq that will assume governing responsibility and authority by 30 June 2004;
 - (b) convening of a national conference reflecting the diversity of Iraqi society; and
 - (c) holding of direct democratic elections by 31 December 2004 if possible, and in no case later than 31 January 2005, to a Transitional National Assembly, which will, *inter alia*, have responsibility for forming a Transitional Government of Iraq and drafting a permanent constitution for Iraq leading to a constitutionally elected government by 31 December 2005.'
6. The International Islamic Fiqh Academy, a subsidiary organ of the OIC, groups Islamic scholars and jurists of international repute. This Academy was restructured with a new statute and working methods in 2006, in the aftermath of the Extraordinary Summit held in Mecca in December 2005, as mentioned in the preceding chapter.
7. The text of the Declaration is in Appendix 5.

6. PROBLEMS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND MINORITIES IN THE WORLD

1. OIC ‘Report of the OIC Contact Group on Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria’, 1988.
2. OIC <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/20/20%20icfm-political-en.htm>>.
3. In which riot police killed scores of inhabitants and mosques were damaged.

7. ISLAMOPHOBIA: A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE

1. UN, <www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2004/issue4/0404p4.html>.
2. Jocelyne Cesari, ‘Securitization and Religious Divides in Europe. Muslims in Western Europe after 9/11. Why the Term Islamophobia is more a Predicament than an Explanation’, *Submission to the Changing Landscape of Citizenship and Security*, GSRL-Paris and Harvard University, 6th PCRD of the European Commission, 1 June 2006.
3. Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, Runnymede Trust, 1997.
4. UN Human Rights Council Report (A/HRC/6/6), 21 August 2007, p. 8, para 19 at <<http://www.oic-oci.org/english/article/UNHRC-rep.pdf>>.
5. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *A Culture of Peaceful Coexistence* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2004), pp. 9–10.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
7. The Coalition for International Justice (CIJ), ‘Eye Witness Survivor Testifies About Executions in Bosnia,’ <<http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/reports.html>>.
8. David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).
9. Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 6–7.
10. For details: OIC, <http://www.oic-oci.org/topic_detail.asp?Ud=1326&x_key=georgetown>.
11. For a full statement, see <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11483.doc.htm>.
12. See: <http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/March/0329MZZ_Presspoint_Wilders.html>.
13. Council of Europe, <http://www.coe.int/t/secretarygeneral/source/Terry-Davis_speeches_compilation.pdf>, p. 107.
14. The text of this lecture can be found in Appendix 6, ‘Selected speeches of the Secretary General’.
15. IHF is described as ‘a unique community of 46 human rights NGOs in the OSCE region, working together internationally to insist on compliance

with human rights standards'. For more details about the organisation and its activities, see <<http://www.ihf-hr.org/>>.

16. Human Rights First is a non-profit, non-partisan international human rights organisation founded in 1978 and based in New York and Washington D.C., without government funding, to maintain independence. For more details about the organisation and its activities, see: <<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/>>.
17. Information is available at <<http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc>>.

8. BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

1. Keynote Address of the OIC Secretary General at the opening of the inter-institutional forum on 'Universal Shared Values: Challenges and New Paradigms', 19 December 2008; see <<http://oic-oci.org/>>.

9. ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

1. These were Food and Agriculture, Trade, Industry, Transport, Communication and Tourism, Financial and Monetary Issues, Energy, Science and Technology, Manpower and Social Affairs, Population and Health, and Technical Cooperation.
2. Namely, Food, Agriculture and Rural Development; Industry; Energy and Mining; Foreign Trade; Transport and Communications; Tourism; Money, Banking and Capital Flows; Technology and Technical Cooperation; Human Resource Development, and Environment.
3. SESRIC, *OIC Member Countries: Economic Performance and Human Development 2000–2007*, Ankara, Nov. 2008.
4. HPI is a composite index calculated based on three essential aspects of human deprivation: longevity, measured by the probability at birth of not surviving to the age of 40; knowledge, measured by adult literacy rate; and a decent standard of living, measured by the percentage of population not using improved water sources and percentage of underweight children under the age of five.
5. As mentioned in Chapter II, under the OIC umbrella, another fund named the 'Islamic Solidarity Fund' has operated since 1976 as a subsidiary organ to provide financial support to the cultural, educational, institutional, technical and economic activities in the Muslim world.
6. WCA countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, and Togo.
7. ICAC, *Trends in World Cotton Prices* <http://www.icac.org/cotton_info/speeches/Townsend/2007/wto_june_2007.pdf>, accessed January 2009.
8. ICAC is an association of governments of cotton producing and consuming countries.

9. ICAC Press Release <http://www.icac.org/cotton_info/publications/press/2008/pr_november_2008.pdf>.
10. *The Geography of Transport Systems*, <<http://www.people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch3en/conc3en/ch3c3en.html>>, accessed 21 April 2008.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

The OIC's Secretaries General since its inception

1. H. Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) 1971–1973
2. Hassan Al-Touhami (Egypt) 1974–1975
3. Amadou Karim Gaye (Senegal) 1975–1979
4. Habib Chatty (Tunisia) 1979–1984
5. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (Pakistan) 1985–1988
6. Hamid Algabid (Niger) 1989–1996
7. Azeddine Laraki (Morocco) 1997–2000
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APPENDIX 2

Inaugural Statement of Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu,
Secretary General of the OIC (Jeddah, 28 December 2004)

It is an immense honour for me to take the office as Secretary General of the OIC. I would like to begin by extending my heartfelt gratitude to all the Member States for the confidence they have placed in me by entrusting me with this important mission in the service of the Muslim world. I am all the more privileged having been proposed by the Republic of Turkey as its candidate and elected by way of vote, for the first time in the OIC's history, after having served for twenty-five years in the OIC as the Director General of IRCICA in Istanbul. I feel deeply grateful and at the same time filled with enthusiasm and emotion as I assume my duties. I shall work with full devotion and commitment towards realisation of the goals expressed in the Charter of the OIC, the objectives and policies of the Member States formulated in their conference resolutions, and the aspirations of Muslims all over the world. I shall make every effort to uphold and underscore these goals and objectives, which for the last thirty-five years brought together a growing number of Muslim nations and Muslim communities all over the world linking them with a spirit of solidarity and common consciousness that are in many ways unique as they are based on and inspired by the eternal principles of Islam.

An indispensable element of the existence and the achievements of the Organisation and its attaining its present status is certainly the support and assistance extended by the Member States. I would like to acknowledge with profound gratitude the close interest that the Member States have shown to the activities of the OIC, its subsidiaries, its

APPENDIX 2

specialised and affiliated institutions, in many ways including their involvement in the various OIC bodies, specialised committees, task forces, by hosting and supporting the various organs of the OIC, and by hosting its conferences and expert meetings. I do hope that the coming years will see the continuation and further strengthening of this support and interest through an even more active participation of all Member States in the OIC's activities.

On this occasion I would also like to pay a deferential tribute to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the host country of the OIC General Secretariat, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Ibn Abdulaziz, and His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, First Deputy Premier and Commander of the National Guard, for the invaluable support it is extending to the Organisation. This is indeed one expression among many of the Kingdom's emphasis of the idea of Islamic solidarity which, as early as the first half of Twentieth century, made the Kingdom one of the leaders of the effort towards activating solidarity among Muslim countries which paved the way for the process that ultimately led to the establishment of the OIC in 1969.

The leaders of twenty-five Muslim countries which assembled in the Rabat Summit, prompted by the attack that was perpetrated on Al Aqsa Mosque in Al Quds, laid the foundations of the OIC on the basis of solidarity among the Member States. They set the broad objectives of consolidating cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and other vital fields of life, eliminating racial segregation, discrimination and eradicating colonialism in all its forms, supporting international peace and security founded on justice, coordinating efforts for the safeguarding of the Holy Places of Islam and supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine, helping them regain their rights and liberate their land, supporting the struggle of Muslim people with a view to preserving their dignity, independence and national rights, and creating a suitable atmosphere for cooperation and understanding among Member States and other countries. Furthermore, the leaders present at the First Summit pledged to contribute to international peace and security in accordance with the aims and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In this way, they sought to contribute to peace and welfare not only in the Muslim world but on a world scale. Regarding matters of concern for the international community, they adopted stances parallel to those of the United Nations. This atti-

tude has until today unfailingly marked the OIC's position over issues that are of concern to the Muslim world as well as those of the world community at large. Unquestionably, all these goals and principles laid down at the establishment of the OIC maintained their importance and remained as matters of current concern in our time.

Where does the OIC stand?

Notwithstanding the lasting validity and prevalence of the fundamental goals defining the OIC's Charter, the real world conditions they refer and apply to are certainly not the same as at the time of the OIC's establishment. The OIC was born in the Cold War period; its establishment and development were promoted by the idea of cooperation among developing countries that was then increasingly gaining currency. After the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the bi-polar world, the transition to a mono-polar world was accompanied by a spread of the market economy and the associated sets of values and rules of conduct. Simultaneously with this process, interdependences between countries increased. Diversities and complementarities of countries appeared more distinctly. Thus in contrast with the previous period, where the foreign relations of each country were defined in terms of alignment with one of the blocs, globalisation led each country to open its external relations towards a linkage with the world economy and adopt a multidimensional perspective. In consequence, international and regional groupings prompted by converging development concerns and political interests gained more importance than before. Certainly one of the factors contributing to this trend was countries' striving to get shares from the benefits of scientific, technological, informational and other advances by taking common stands in international negotiations. Thus not only international cooperation becomes more indispensable day by day in our time, it also appears clearly that international organisations will be expected to assume more prominent roles in future. It is observed in real life that together with 'globalisation' a concomitant process is taking place whereby trends of 'regionalisation' are increasing. To recapitulate, a major development of the Twentieth century was the establishment of international and regional organisations as vehicles in international relations, and it was through them that each country participated in world politics. In the Twenty-first century, however, participation in global

APPENDIX 2

affairs is likely to depend more on the balances of power and interdependencies between the regional and international organisations themselves. Therefore, the OIC will have to reconsider and strengthen the role it is expected to play in a capacity as the partner of other major organisations and the intergovernmental institution representing the Muslim world on matters commonly agreed by the Member States.

Parallel to these changing circumstances, the OIC's as a result of the steady increase the effect of external and internal factors and of its membership activities were constantly expanded and diversified over the decades under. With fifty-seven Member States, the OIC is today the second largest organisation after the UN. The OIC countries, dispersed over a large geographical region on four continents, extending from Albania in the north to Mozambique in the south, and from Guyana in the west to Indonesia in the east, account for more than one fifth of the world population. The OIC countries represent a substantial part of the developing countries, possess significant human and material resources, brain power and manpower, and have a considerable potential for production and trade. At the same time, the Muslim world is the bearer and the holder of the Islamic civilisation which has been one of the main agents in the formation of universal civilisation and produced a multidimensional heritage that withstood the test of time and preserved its vitality although the Muslim world has lately failed to keep pace with modern advances in science and know-how. Today the Muslim countries lag much behind the industrialised countries and even the average of the developing countries in terms of all indicators of socio-economic development from literacy rates and income levels to technology and industry.

The establishment and the subsequent development of the OIC concretised the concept of Islamic solidarity in the contemporary world. The OIC emerged in response to the socio-political circumstances of recent history and evolved in a continuum. As any other organisation, it went through successive stages of development until it reached its present status. At times it was directly affected by the surrounding circumstances, sometimes transformations, which shaped world political and economic balances. Throughout those decades, the OIC succeeded in maintaining its continuity as a forum where the member countries have voiced their concerns and found frameworks and channels of cooperation.

The OIC in the Twenty-first century

Notwithstanding its multifarious areas of experience in international relations and the maturity it has acquired as an intergovernmental organisation, I must honestly state that the OIC has not been able to fully achieve its potential and establish itself as a powerful entity capable of actively voicing the Muslim causes and making itself heard in the international arena. Given the large membership of the OIC and the diversities between its countries, it is certainly hard to reach cohesion of opinions on each and every matter but it must certainly be possible to achieve harmony and a collective spirit as it has been possible on many top political issues such as the problems of Al Quds and Palestine, Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Turkish Cypriot State, the problem of Kashmir, the Muslim minorities and communities, among others, as well as over such problems of general common concern as educational development and eradication of poverty. These examples confirm that the capacity is there for the OIC to engage its Member States more actively in a concerted action whereby the Muslim world would assert itself in the international scene through the OIC. This certainly depends to a large extent on the political will of the Member States, on their firm determination to render the OIC an effective organisation which would have a weight in international affairs.

The OIC must acquire more weight and impact on the world scene. This is essential taking into consideration that its present position is not commensurate with and does not reflect the real strength of the Muslim world as regards its wide geographical coverage, its abundant manpower, rich and varied natural resources, untapped potentials and capacities. At present, there are greater possibilities for enhancing the OIC's weight and impact in contrast with the situation thirty-five years ago, because the outside world is now much more aware of the Muslim world, its diversities and cultural riches, of the Muslim minorities and communities whose cultural and religious identities become increasingly more visible. Moreover, a growing number of countries are showing interest in the OIC and expressing a clear wish to become members or observers to the Organisation. The Russian Federation has manifested such an interest.

At this juncture, a renewed effort is necessary to draw the support and the interest of public opinion within and outside the Muslim world towards the OIC's present and future role by establishing linkages with non-governmental organisations, which represent the people, society

APPENDIX 2

itself, and I believe that in this relationship the Muslim world can best be inspired by its own history, having been the birthplace of the waqf institution, of which NGOs are a contemporary extension and a modern version.

In order to enhance its status, increase its efficiency and intensify its activities, the OIC has to be fully aware of its own potentials and capacities and take the necessary steps to mobilise them. A positive development in this regard has been the will and intention that the Member States have formulated more clearly and more firmly than before during the last few years, towards reforming the OIC and its mechanisms. In this light, studies were launched recently and are ongoing, to restructure the General Secretariat, and separately, to review and rationalise the resolutions of the OIC meetings at various levels. No doubt, adoption of clearer resolutions formulated in an optimal and result-oriented manner would contribute in enhancing the impact and the credibility of the OIC within and outside the Muslim world. Other methodological and procedural aspects of the work can also be improved, and this would surely have a positive effect on the OIC's image. A recent example is the election of the new Secretary General by the system of voting which was highly commended by the representatives of the Member States participating in the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and in the world at large.

The Muslim world, and in fact the entire world, stand at a crucial moment with regard to a number of vital questions that bear implications for future peace, security and welfare of humanity, on top of which is the Palestinian cause to which the OIC has been attaching special attention, as well as the situation in Iraq. The Muslim world also faces the many new threats of various kinds, including civil wars and regional conflicts, that the whole world is concerned with. Mounting problems are faced in other areas as well: we need to intensify the existing efforts towards eradicating poverty. More cooperation is needed to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in our countries. No doubt, preventive measures are the immediate action we need to take, while durable solutions to these and many other problems depend on economic and social development. Still another problem that calls for more care and attention in the present period is the protection of the environment. This by itself has to constitute one sector of OIC activities. All these problems not only require concerted cooperation among the Member States but also working relations with the con-

cerned, especially the neighbouring countries outside the Member States. Regarding the growing threat of regional conflicts, the OIC has on its record successful interventions in cases that had bearings on the Muslim countries, communities and minorities. The existing mechanisms, in particular goodwill committees, must be reinforced to be used even more extensively in dealing with such problems.

To be able to follow the global developments, voice opinions on them and take action, the OIC needs to broaden and diversify its perspectives. This constitutes an urgency because some of the conflicts that hold the attention of the international opinion are related to the Muslim world although they are not caused or provoked by the Muslim countries. Another similarly sad situation facing the Muslim world is the problem of international terrorism. In part of world opinion, terrorism is associated with ideological and religious extremism in the Muslim countries and thereby implicitly attributed to the Muslim world. We have to work persistently to make the world understand that terrorism has no religious or cultural origin. It is a threat to all countries including the Muslim countries. It must be counteracted by short and long-term measures that would duly respect the rule of law. It would be beneficial that the OIC defines its own strategy and at the same time participates in a global strategy of cooperation against terrorism together with the UN and other concerned institutions. Within this framework, an objective and correct definition of terrorism has yet to be made. Terrorism in all of its forms, including state terrorism, must be condemned.

The subject of human rights is of topical importance for the world opinion and the OIC. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam adopted in 1995 should be underscored on all relevant occasions. Efforts should be multiplied to reaffirm the position of the Muslim world in various areas such as human rights, international law, settlement of disputes, and to reject unilateral governance in any matter of international relations. The OIC should convey the Muslim world's stances over such issues to the world opinion. This would contribute at the same time to our efforts to project a correct image of the Muslim world, make its views and values known, and eliminate 'Islamophobia'. To this end, better and wider use should be made of the mass media and information technologies. The subsidiary organs and institutions of the OIC can fruitfully contribute to this effort within the framework of their respective mandates.

APPENDIX 2

Taking into consideration the new needs, it is evidently high time that the OIC engages in serious self-criticism, evaluates its strengths and weaknesses, availabilities and potentials, and introduces reforms wherever necessary. Reform is the key word for the new period. The OIC needs to adapt itself to the new conditions and new expectations, a need that some other international and regional organisations, such as UN, OUA and ASEAN are already addressing. For this purpose it needs to optimise and accelerate its activities which can be done by a review, and subsequently a restructuring, of the General Secretariat and the OIC system as a whole, and by introducing administrative reforms. This necessitates a re-examination, and if necessary a revision, of the distribution of activities within the General Secretariat, to be followed by an assessment of the needs and availabilities of manpower as compared to the tasks and duties. Accordingly, the General Secretariat would be endowed with the necessary highly qualified staff.

Increasing the efficiency and accuracy of both the policies and the activities is indispensable so that the Organisation rises to the challenges of the Twenty-first century. In this regard we presently stand at a cross-roads, where we have to deploy a firm will towards reforming and strengthening the OIC so that from now on it can have a say in world politics on behalf of the Muslim world and affirm its position among major international organisations. In this process of globalisation where international organisations have already gained more relevance than before if not more effectiveness, the Secretary General can assume a more effective mission in the service of the Member States. Therefore, reactivating and supporting the coordination role of the Secretary General can be instrumental in enlarging the sphere of influence of the Organisation.

Globalisation requires that we devote special care to the reinforcement and activation of dialogue between the Muslim world on one hand and other groups of countries on the other, particularly the Western world, and other major powers. A number of dialogue processes are already established between the Muslim world and Europe, such as the OIC-EU Joint Forum which was initiated by the Turkish Government four years ago and supported by dialogue sessions involving policy-makers and opinion leaders of each side. I believe there is a need to consider establishing contacts conducive to dialogue with major regions beside Europe as well. The OIC can assume a greater role in this regard on behalf of the Islamic world. In this context we shall also

seek the possibility of developing more intense working relations with regional organisations to which the Member States are parties. These activities can be given more concrete and practical content than that provided by mere intellectual exercises and statements of intent. This can be done by identifying specific topics and problem areas that can be addressed jointly by the pertinent institutions of each side starting from areas of immediate concern such as improving the public image of each culture, disseminating correct information on the cultures of the Muslim world and other cultures to each other, monitoring and correcting the coverage of news and events of each side by each other's mass media and eliminating stereotypes and negative biases of peoples one about another.

Culture provides the ground for encounters between peoples, strengthens bonds and affinities and helps to build bridges of common consciousness and cooperation towards protection and advancement of human spiritual, intellectual and material achievements. Economy, on the other hand, provides the arena, the institutions and the vectors of activity for collective cooperation towards development and welfare. I believe that one of the most important tasks in the present period is to give a new impetus to economic cooperation in many ways, among others by encouraging the Member States to ratify and participate in the execution of the instruments that have been created within the framework of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial in rendering operational some of these instruments, such as the Framework Agreement for the Establishment of a Trade Preferential System and the Export Financing Scheme, but also to underline the need to activate the other mechanisms which have not received the interest they deserve, such as the Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic Cooperation Among the Member States.

At this point I would like to underscore the important supervisory role being played by the specialised high-level committees of the OIC in charge of the various sectors of activities, namely the Al-Quds Committee chaired by H.M. the King of Morocco, the three Standing Committees, namely the Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) chaired by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Standing Committee on Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC) chaired by the President of the Republic of Senegal, and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) chaired by the President of the Republic of

APPENDIX 2

Turkey. The distribution of supervisory tasks among the standing committees has proven to be an ingenious system which was instituted by the Third Islamic Summit held in Taif and Mecca in 1981.

A need for re-examination, revision, reform and improvement is felt in these and other areas some of which were already identified by the OIC conferences at various levels. Undoubtedly, the period ahead may bring unforeseen, unpredictable but hopefully positive and beneficial developments for the Muslim world and the OIC. Certainly, we shall derive strength from the collective will of the Member States which shall emanate from their common aspiration to find solutions to the just Muslim causes, achieve socio-economic development, encourage a fruitful dialogue between civilisations, and contribute to a peaceful coexistence of peoples around the world.

The Twenty-first century global environment is bringing new, different and perhaps unprecedented challenges for the Muslim world and for the OIC. In this environment, international solidarity and cooperation will be needed more than ever. The OIC as a forum of solidarity and cooperation will have to consider accommodating new subjects in its agenda, increasing its dynamism and flexibility, accelerating its procedures, and addressing many new areas that are likely to call for joint action in future. With the support, interest and active engagement of its Member States, the OIC will certainly be capable of implementing the desired reforms and becoming a stronger institution that makes itself heard and contributes in elevating the standing of Muslim countries in the community of nations.

Before concluding, I would like to express my profound gratitude to H.E. Dr. Abdelouahed Belkéziz, my distinguished predecessor, and all the ex-Secretaries General for their invaluable devoted services which contributed in bringing this Organisation successfully to its present status. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Belkéziz for the sincere support and encouragement he has continuously extended to IRCICA and its activities.

For my part, with your support and your confidence, I shall make every effort in this direction. May God guide us to the right path.

APPENDIX 3

Ten-Year Programme of Action to Meet the Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah in the 21st Century

Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference
Makkah al Mukarramah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
5–6 Dhul Qa'dah 1426 H/7–8 December 2005

Introduction

The Muslim World is faced with grave political, socio-economic, cultural and scientific challenges with implications for its unity, peace, security and development. OIC Member States would need to cooperate decisively in order to face these challenges and to take necessary initiatives to overcome them. It has therefore become imperative for them to take joint actions within the framework of the OIC, based on common values and ideals so as to revive the Muslim Ummah's pioneering role as a fine example of tolerance and enlightened moderation, and a force for international peace and harmony.

Conscious of these challenges and anxious to bring the Ummah out of its present situation into a new reality marked by greater solidarity and more prosperity to achieve its decisive objectives and aspirations, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz, addressed the pilgrims on Eid Al-Adha Day in 1425 H, and called upon the leaders of the Muslim Ummah to convene an Extraordinary Conference of the leaders of OIC Member States to consider the issues of solidarity and Joint Islamic Action.

In preparation for this Extraordinary Conference, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques invited the scholars and intellectuals of the

APPENDIX 3

Ummah to meet in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in order to consider the state of the Ummah, develop visions and concepts and propose optimal solutions to the challenges facing the Ummah in all fields. Accordingly, an elite group of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from different countries met in Makkah Al-Mukarramah from 5 to 7 Sha'ban 1426 H (9–11 September 2005) and examined the challenges facing the Ummah in the intellectual, cultural, political, media, economic and developmental fields. They also formulated a number of recommendations to effectively address these challenges.

Based on the views and recommendations of scholars and intellectuals, convinced of the potential for the Muslim Ummah to achieve its renaissance, and in order to take practical steps towards strengthening the bonds of Islamic solidarity, achieve unity of ranks, and project the true image and noble values of Islam and its civilisational approaches, a Ten-Year Programme of Action has been developed, which reviews the most prominent challenges facing the Muslim world today, as well as ways and means to address them in an objective and realistic way in order to serve as a practicable and workable programme for all OIC Member States.

In the intellectual and political fields, there are major issues, such as establishing the values of moderation and tolerance, combating extremism, violence and terrorism, countering Islamophobia, achieving solidarity and cooperation among Member States, conflict prevention, the question of Palestine, the rights of Muslim minorities and communities, and rejecting unilateral sanctions. All of these are issues which require a renewed commitment to be addressed through effective strategies. In this context, special attention needs to be given to Africa, which is the most affected region, due to poverty, diseases, illiteracy, famine, and debt burden.

In the economic and scientific fields, the Ummah needs to achieve higher levels of development and prosperity, given its abundant economic resources and capacities. Priority must be given to enhancing economic cooperation, intra-OIC trade, alleviating poverty in OIC Member States, particularly in conflict-affected areas, and addressing issues related to globalization, economic liberalization, environment, and science and technology.

As for education and culture, there is an urgent need to tackle the spread of illiteracy and low standards of education at all levels as well as a need to redress ideological deviation. In the social field, it is imperative to focus on the rights of women, children and the family.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

In implementing the new vision and goals for the Muslim world, the role of the OIC is central, which requires its reform in a way that meets the hopes and aspirations of the Ummah in the 21st Century.

To achieve this new vision and mission for a brighter, more prosperous and dignified future for the Ummah, We, the Kings, Heads of State and Heads of Government of the OIC Member States, decide to adopt the following Ten-Year Programme of Action, with a mid-term review, for immediate implementation:

1. Intellectual and political issues

I. Political will

1. Demonstrate the necessary political will in order to translate the anticipated new vision into concrete reality and call upon the Secretary-General to take necessary steps to submit practical proposals to the Member States for consideration and subsequent submission to the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.
2. Urge Member States to fully implement the provisions of the OIC Charter and resolutions.

II. Solidarity and Joint Islamic Action

1. Demonstrate strong commitment and credibility in Joint Islamic Action by effective implementation of OIC resolutions, and to focus on the adoption of implementable resolutions until the Ummah reaches its objectives. In this context, the Secretary General should be enabled to fully play his role in following up the implementation of all OIC resolutions.
2. Affirm commitment to Islamic solidarity among the OIC Member States vis-à-vis the challenges and threats faced or experienced by the Muslim Ummah, and request the Secretary General to elaborate a general framework, in consultation with Member States, on their duties and obligations in this regard, including solidarity and support to Member States who are facing threats.
3. Participate and coordinate effectively in all regional and international forums, in order to protect and promote the collective interests of the Muslim Ummah, including UN reform, expanding the Security Council membership, and extending the necessary support to candidatures of OIC Member States to international and regional organizations.

APPENDIX 3

4. Continue to support the issue of Al Quds Al Sharif as a central cause of the OIC and the Muslim Ummah.
5. Reaffirm previous resolutions and decisions of the OIC on Jammu and Kashmir, Cyprus, Nagorno Karabakh and Somalia and demonstrate solidarity with these Muslim peoples in their just causes.

III. Islam—the religion of moderation and tolerance

1. Endeavour to spread the correct ideas about Islam as a religion of moderation and tolerance and to safeguard Islamic values, beliefs and principles in order to fortify Muslims against extremism and narrow-mindedness.
2. Condemn extremism in all its forms and manifestations, as it contradicts Islamic and human values; and address its political, economic, social, and cultural root-causes, through development programmes and resolution of long-standing conflicts, which are to be faced with rationality, persuasion, and good counsel.
3. Emphasize that inter-civilizational dialogue, based on mutual respect and understanding, and equality amongst people are prerequisites for international peace and security, tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and participation in developing the mechanism for that dialogue.
4. Encourage inter-religious dialogue and underline common values and denominators.
5. Ensure the participation of the OIC and its specialised bodies, as a proactive partner in the dialogue among civilizations and religions, as well as in initiatives and efforts exerted in this regard.
6. Utilize the different mass media in order to serve and defend the causes of the Muslim Ummah, promote the noble principles and values of Islam, and correct misconceptions about it.
7. Strive for the teaching of Islamic education, culture, civilization, and the jurisprudence and literature of difference; call on Member States to cooperate amongst themselves in order to develop balanced educational curricula that promote values of tolerance, human rights, openness, and understanding of other religions and cultures; reject fanaticism and extremism, and establish pride in the Islamic identity.

IV. Multiplicity of Islamic jurisprudence

1. Underline the need to strengthen dialogue among Islamic Schools, affirm the true faith of their followers and the inadmissibility of

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

accusing them of heresy, as well as the inviolability of their blood, honor and property, as long as they believe in Allah Almighty, in the Prophet (PBUH) and in the other pillars of the Islamic faith, respect the pillars of Islam and do not deny any self-evident tenet of religion.

2. Condemn the audacity of those who are not qualified in issuing religious rulings (fatwa), thereby flouting the tenets and pillars of the religion and the well-established schools of jurisprudence. Consequently, compliance with the principle of fatwa, as approved by scholars, must be observed in line with the relevant provisions of the International Islamic Conference held in Amman in late July 2005 and in the recommendations of the Forum of Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals Preparatory to the Summit convened by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah Al Mukarramah from 9–11 September 2005.

V. The Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA)

1. Entrust the Secretary General to invite a group from the members of the Islamic Fiqh Academy and eminent Islamic scholars from outside to prepare a detailed study to develop the IFA's work in accordance with the following objectives, for consideration by the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers:
 - a. Coordinate religious ruling (fatwa) authorities in the Muslim world.
 - b. Counter religious and sectarian extremism, refrain from accusing Islamic schools of heresy, emphasize dialogue among them, and strengthen balance, moderation, and tolerance.
 - c. Refute fatwas that take Muslims away from the parameters and constants of their religion and its established schools.

VI. Combating terrorism

1. Emphasize the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, and reject any justification or rationalization for it, consider it as a global phenomenon that is not connected with any religion, race, color, or country, and distinguish it from the legitimate resistance to foreign occupation, which does not sanction the killing of innocent civilians.

APPENDIX 3

2. Introduce comprehensive qualitative changes to national laws and legislations in order to criminalise all terrorist practices as well as all practices to support, finance, or instigate terrorism.
3. Affirm commitment to the OIC Convention on Combating Terrorism, participate actively in international counter-terrorism efforts, and endeavor to implement the recommendations of the International Conference on Combating Terrorism, held in Riyadh in February 2005, including the establishment of an International Center for Combating Terrorism, as well as the recommendations of the Special Meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, held in Kuala Lumpur in April 2002.
4. Support efforts to develop an International Code of Conduct to Combat Terrorism and to convene an international conference or a special session of the UN General Assembly to reiterate the international consensus on establishing a comprehensive strategy to combat this dangerous phenomenon.

VII. Combating Islamophobia

1. Emphasize the responsibility of the international community, including all governments, to ensure respect for all religions and combat their defamation.
2. Affirm the need to counter Islamophobia, through the establishment of an observatory at the OIC General Secretariat to monitor all forms of Islamophobia, issue an annual report thereon, and ensure cooperation with the relevant Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in order to counter Islamophobia.
3. Endeavor to have the United Nations adopt an international resolution to counter Islamophobia, and call upon all States to enact laws to counter it, including deterrent punishments.
4. Initiate a structured and sustained dialogue in order to project the true values of Islam and empower Muslim countries to help in the war against extremism and terrorism.

VIII. Human Rights and Good Governance

1. Seriously endeavor to enlarge the scope of political participation, ensure equality, civil liberties and social justice and to promote transparency and accountability, and eliminate corruption in the OIC Member States.

2. Call upon the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers to consider the possibility of establishing an independent permanent body to promote human rights in the Member States, in accordance with the provisions of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam and to also call for the elaboration of an OIC Charter for Human Rights. Introduce changes to national laws and regulations in order to guarantee the respect of human rights in Member States.
3. Mandate the OIC General Secretariat to cooperate with other international and regional organizations to guarantee the rights of Muslim Minorities and Communities in non-OIC Member States, and promote close cooperation with the Governments of the States hosting Muslim communities.

IX. Palestine and the Occupied Arab Territories

1. Make all efforts to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the full completion of the Israeli withdrawal from all remaining Lebanese territories, in compliance with Security Council Resolution 425, and extend effective support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.
2. Maintain a united stand on the comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian question according to OIC resolutions, UN resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1515 and UN General Assembly Resolution 194, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Roadmap, in coordination and consultation with the UN, the Quartet, and other stakeholders, such as to make full withdrawal as a prerequisite for establishing normal relations with Israel, and for providing the OIC with a greater role in establishing peace.
3. Emphasize the central importance of the cause of Al-Quds for the Muslim Ummah, the need to establish the Palestinian rights in the city, preserve its heritage as well as its Arab and Islamic identity as a symbol of solidarity and the meeting point of divine religions; underline the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque and its premises against violations and the need to protect the other Islamic and Christian holy places, counter the judaization of the Holy City, and support the efforts of Al-Quds Committee under the chairmanship of His Majesty King Mohamed VI; call for support to Baytmal Al-Quds

APPENDIX 3

and Al-Aqsa Fund, support the steadfastness of Al-Quds population and institutions, and establish Al-Aqsa University in Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

4. Extend full support to the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to negotiate for the inalienable Palestinian rights and extend necessary assistance to ensure control of all Palestinian territories, international crossings, reopen Gaza airport and seaport, and connect Gaza with the West Bank in order to ensure free movement of the Palestinians.
5. Work together with the international community to compel Israel to stop and dismantle its settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan; remove the racist separation Wall built inside the Palestinian territories, including within and around the city of Al-Quds, in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions and the Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

X. Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict Peace Building

1. Strengthen the role of the OIC in conflict prevention, confidence-building, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation in OIC Member States as well as in conflict situations involving Muslim communities.
2. Enhance cooperation among the OIC Member States and between the OIC and international and regional organizations in order to protect the rights and interests of the Member States in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building.

XI. Reform of the OIC

1. Reform the OIC through restructuring, and consider changing its name, review its Charter and activities and provide it with highly qualified manpower, in such a manner as to promote its role, reactivate its institutions and strengthen its relations with the officially recognised NGOs in the OIC Member States; empower the Secretary-General to discharge his duties and provide him with sufficient flexibility and the resources that enable him to carry out the tasks assigned to him and strengthen all OIC specialised and affiliated organs in order to allow them to play their aspired role, and rein-

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

force coordination with the General Secretariat, and request it to review the activities of these organs and recommend the dissolution of those that prove to be inefficient.

2. Establish a mechanism for the follow-up of resolutions by creating an Executive Body, comprising the Summit and Ministerial Troikas, the OIC host country, and the General Secretariat. The Member States concerned should be invited to participate in the deliberations of these meetings.
3. Mandate the Secretary-General to prepare a study to strengthen the role of Islamic Solidarity Fund and develop it, and submit the study to the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.
4. Urge Member States to pay in full and on time their mandatory contributions to the General Secretariat and Subsidiary Organs, in accordance with relevant resolutions, in order to enable Member States to avail themselves of the facilities and services offered by OIC subsidiary organs and specialised and affiliated institutions.

2. Development, socio-economic and scientific issues

I. Economic Cooperation

1. Call upon the Member States to sign and ratify all existing OIC trade and economic agreements, and to implement the provisions of the relevant OIC Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among OIC Member States.
2. Mandate COMCEC to promote measures to expand the scope of intra-OIC trade, and to consider the possibility of establishing a Free Trade Area between the Member States in order to achieve greater economic integration to raise it to a percentage of 20% of the overall trade volume during the period covered by the plan, and call on the Member States to support its activities and to participate in those activities at the highest possible level with delegations possessing the necessary expertise.
3. Promote endeavors for institutionalised and enhanced cooperation between OIC and regional and international institutions working in the economic and commercial fields.
4. Support OIC Member States in their efforts to accede to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and promote concerted positions between the Member States within the WTO.
5. Call upon the OIC Member States to facilitate the freedom of movement of businessmen and investors across their borders.

APPENDIX 3

6. Support expanding electronic commerce among the OIC Member States and call on the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry to strengthen its activities in the field of data and expertise exchanges between chambers of commerce of the Member States.
7. Call upon the Member States to coordinate their environmental policies and positions in international environmental fora so as to prevent any adverse effects of such policies on their economic development.

II. Supporting the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)

1. Establish a special fund within the IDB in order to help address and alleviate poverty, and provide job opportunities; and commission the IDB Board of Governors to establish this special fund, including mechanisms for its financing.
2. Mandate the Islamic Development Bank to coordinate with the OIC General Secretariat in order to make the necessary contacts with the World Health Organization and other relevant institutions to draw up a programme for combating diseases and epidemics, to be financed through the special fund that will be created within the IDB.
3. Commission the IDB Board of Governors to take necessary measures for ensuring a substantial increase in the Bank's authorised, subscribed, and paid-up capital, so as to enable it to strengthen its role in providing financial support and technical assistance to OIC Member States, and strengthen the Islamic Corporation for Trade Finance recently established within the IDB.
4. Urge the IDB to develop its mechanisms and programmes aimed at cooperation with the private sector and to consider streamlining and activating its decision-making process.
5. Urge the IDB and its institutions to promote investment opportunities and intra-OIC trade, and to conduct other feasibility studies to provide the necessary information to develop and promote joint ventures.

III. Social solidarity in the face of natural disasters

1. Islam advocates solidarity with, and assistance to, all the needy without discrimination, which requires the Islamic States to develop and adopt a clear strategy on Islamic relief action and support the

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

trend towards cooperation and coordination between individual relief efforts of Islamic States and Islamic civil society institutions on the one hand, and international civil society institutions and organizations on the other hand.

2. Help countries affected by these disasters to rebuild their buffer stocks.

IV. Supporting development and poverty alleviation in Africa

1. Promote activities aimed at achieving economic and social development in African countries, including supporting industrialization, energizing trade and investment, transferring technology, alleviating their debt burden and poverty, and eradicating diseases; welcome the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), adopt to this end, a special programme for the development of Africa.
2. Call upon the Member States to participate in international efforts to support programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and capacity-building in the Least-Developed Member States of the OIC.
3. Urge donor Member States to cancel bilateral and multilateral debts to low-income Member States.
4. Urge international specialised institutions and organizations to exert greater efforts to alleviate poverty in the Least-Developed Member States and assist Muslim societies, the refugees and displaced in the OIC Member States, and Muslim Minorities and Communities in non-OIC Member States; urge States to contribute to the World Fund for Solidarity and Combating Poverty.

V. Higher Education, Science and Technology

1. Effectively improve and reform educational institutions and curricula in all levels, link postgraduate studies to the comprehensive development plans of the Islamic World. At the same time, priority should be given to science and technology and facilitating academic interaction and exchange of knowledge among the academic institutions of Member States, and urge the Member States to strive for quality education that promotes creativity, innovation, and research and development.

APPENDIX 3

2. Assimilate highly-qualified Muslims within the Muslim World, develop a comprehensive strategy in order to utilize their expertise and prevent brain migration phenomenon.
3. Entrust the General Secretariat to study the creation of an OIC Award for Outstanding Scientific Achievements by Muslim scientists.
4. Call upon Islamic countries to encourage research and development programmes, taking into account that the global percentage of this activity is 2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and request Member States to ensure that their individual contribution is not inferior to half of this percentage.
5. Take advantage of the important results of the World Summit on Information Society, held in Tunis, in which all Muslim States actively participated with a view to close the digital gap between the developed and developing States and request the General Secretariat to follow up these results in order to build the capacities of Member States to adhere to the information society which, in turn, will sustain development in Muslim States.
6. Encourage public and private national research institutions to invest in technology capacity-building, in areas of advanced technologies, such as the acquisition of nuclear technology for peaceful uses.
7. Review the performance of the OIC-affiliated universities so as to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, and call for participation in the two Waqfs (Endowments) dedicated to the two universities in Niger and Uganda, and provide support to the International Islamic University in Malaysia.
8. Call upon the Member States to extend enhanced support to the Islamic University of Technology in Bangladesh in order to enable it to contribute more towards capacity building of the OIC Member States through human resources development.
9. Urge the IDB to further enhance its programme of scholarships for outstanding students and Hi—Tech specializations aimed at developing the scientific, technical, and research capabilities of scientists and researchers in the Member States.

VI. Rights of Women, Youth, Children, and the Family in the Muslim World

1. Strengthen laws aimed at enhancing the advancement of women in Muslim societies in economic, cultural, social, and political fields,

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

in accordance with Islamic values of justice and equality; and aimed also at protecting women from all forms of violence and discrimination and adhering to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, in line with the Islamic values of justice and equality.

2. Give special attention to women's education and female literacy.
3. Expedite developing 'The Covenant on the Rights of Women in Islam', in accordance with Resolution No. 60/27-P and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.
4. Strive to provide free and quality basic education for all children.
5. Strengthen laws aimed at preserving the rights of children, enjoying the highest possible health levels, taking effective measures in order to eradicate poliomyelitis and protect them from all forms of violence and exploitation.
6. Encourage the Member States to sign and ratify the OIC Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in Islam, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its annexed Optional Protocols, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol with regard to the Girl Child.
7. Call upon all Member States to support and promote youth programmes and youth forums.
8. Call upon the OIC to contribute towards projecting Islam as a religion that guarantees full protection of women's rights and encourages their participation in all walks of life.
9. Accord necessary attention to the family as the principal nucleus of the Muslim society, exert all possible efforts, at all levels, to face up to the contemporary social challenges confronting the Muslim family and affecting its cohesion, on the basis of Islamic values.
10. Establish a Division responsible for Family Affairs within the framework of the General Secretariat's restructuring.

VII. Cultural and Information Exchange among Member States

1. Call upon TV channels and the mass media to deal with international mass media effectively in order to enable the Muslim world to express its perspective on international developments. Call on the

APPENDIX 3

mass media in Member States, including satellite channels, to agree on a Code of Ethics that caters for diversity and pluralism and safeguards the Ummah's values and interests. Mandate the Secretary-General to prepare a report to evaluate the current situation of IINA, ISBO, and the OIC Information Department; consider ways and means to activate the role and mechanisms of the media within the framework of the OIC System; and submit proposals, in this regard, to the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers for consideration. Accord attention to Arabic as the language of Qur'an, develop programmes for translation between the languages of the Muslim Ummah, and implement programs of cultural exchanges among the OIC Member States, including Observer States.

2. Strengthen COMIAC in order to give more care to information and cultural issues in Member States. In this context, the Member States should voluntarily support digital solidarity and allow the OIC to actively participate in the efforts to reduce the digital gap.

APPENDIX 4

Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference

In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful
We, the Member States of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference,
determined:

- to acknowledge the Conference of Kings, Heads of State and Government of the Member States convened in Rabat from 9 to 12 Rajab, 1389 H, corresponding to 22–25 September 1969, as well as the Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Jeddah from 14–18 Muharram 1392 H corresponding to 29 February to 4 March 1972;
- to be guided by the noble Islamic values of unity and fraternity, and affirming the essentiality of promoting and consolidating the unity and solidarity among the Member States in securing their common interests at the international arena;
- to adhere our commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, the present Charter and International Law;
- to preserve and promote the lofty Islamic values of peace, compassion, tolerance, equality, justice and human dignity;
- to endeavour to work for revitalizing Islam's pioneering role in the world while ensuring sustainable development, progress and prosperity for the peoples of Member States;
- to enhance and strengthen the bond of unity and solidarity among the Muslim peoples and Member States;
- to respect, safeguard and defend the national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all Member States;
- to contribute to international peace and security, understanding and dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions and promote and

APPENDIX 4

encourage friendly relations and good neighbourliness, mutual respect and cooperation;

- to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, rule of law, democracy and accountability in Member States in accordance with their constitutional and legal systems;
- to promote confidence and encourage friendly relations, mutual respect and cooperation between Member States and other States;
- to foster noble Islamic values concerning moderation, tolerance, respect for diversity, preservation of Islamic symbols and common heritage and to defend the universality of Islamic religion;
- to advance the acquisition and popularisation of knowledge in consonance with the lofty ideals of Islam to achieve intellectual excellence;
- to promote cooperation among Member States to achieve sustained socio-economic development for effective integration in the global economy, in conformity with the principles of partnership and equality;
- to preserve and promote all aspects related to environment for present and future generations; to respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in the domestic affairs and to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each Member State;
- to support the struggle of the Palestinian people, who are presently under foreign occupation, and to empower them to attain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and to establish their sovereign state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, while safeguarding its historic and Islamic character, and the holy places therein;
- to safeguard and promote the rights of women and their participation in all spheres of life, in accordance with the laws and legislation of Member States;
- to create conducive conditions for sound upbringing of Muslim children and youth, and to inculcate in them Islamic values through education for strengthening their cultural, social, moral and ethical ideals;
- to assist Muslim minorities and communities outside the Member States to preserve their dignity, cultural and religious identity;
- to uphold the objectives and principles of the present Charter, the Charter of the United Nations and international law as well as inter-

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

national humanitarian law while strictly adhering to the principle of non-interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State;

- to strive to achieve good governance at the international level and the democratization of the international relations based on the principles of equality and mutual respect among States and non-interference in matters which are within their domestic jurisdiction;

Have resolved to cooperate in achieving these goals and agreed to the present amended Charter.

CHAPTER I

Objectives and Principles

Article 1

The objectives of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference shall be:

1. To enhance and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity among the Member States;
2. To safeguard and protect the common interests and support the legitimate causes of the Member States and coordinate and unify the efforts of the Member States in view of the challenges faced by the Islamic world in particular and the international community in general;
3. To respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in the domestic affairs and to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each Member State;
4. To support the restoration of complete sovereignty and territorial integrity of any Member State under occupation, as a result of aggression, on the basis of international law and cooperation with the relevant international and regional organisations;
5. To ensure active participation of the Member States in the global political, economic and social decision-making processes to secure their common interests;
6. To promote inter-state relations based on justice, mutual respect and good neighbourliness to ensure global peace, security and harmony;
7. To reaffirm its support for the rights of peoples as stipulated in the UN Charter and international law;

APPENDIX 4

8. To support and empower the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish their sovereign State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, while safeguarding its historic and Islamic character as well as the Holy places therein;
9. To strengthen intra-Islamic economic and trade cooperation; in order to achieve economic integration leading to the establishment of an Islamic Common Market;
10. To exert efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive human development and economic well-being in Member States;
11. To disseminate, promote and preserve the Islamic teachings and values based on moderation and tolerance, promote Islamic culture and safeguard Islamic heritage;
12. To protect and defend the true image of Islam, to combat defamation of Islam and encourage dialogue among civilisations and religions;
13. To enhance and develop science and technology and encourage research and cooperation among Member States in these fields;
14. To promote and to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms including the rights of women, children, youth, elderly and people with special needs as well as the preservation of Islamic family values;
15. To emphasize, protect and promote the role of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society;
16. To safeguard the rights, dignity and religious and cultural identity of Muslim communities and minorities in non-Member States;
17. To promote and defend unified position on issues of common interest in the international fora;
18. To cooperate in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, organised crime, illicit drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering and human trafficking;
19. To cooperate and coordinate in humanitarian emergencies such as natural disasters;
20. To promote cooperation in social, cultural and information fields among the Member States.

Article 2

The Member States undertake that in order to realize the objectives in Article 1, they shall be guided and inspired by the noble Islamic teachings and values and act in accordance with the following principles:

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

1. All Member States commit themselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter;
2. Member States are sovereign, independent and equal in rights and obligations;
3. All Member States shall settle their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from use or threat of use of force in their relations;
4. All Member States undertake to respect national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other Member States and shall refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of others;
5. All Member States undertake to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and to refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs as enshrined in the present Charter, the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law;
6. As mentioned in the UN Charter, nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the Organisation and its Organs to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State or related to it;
7. Member States shall uphold and promote, at the national and international levels, good governance, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law;
8. Member States shall endeavour to protect and preserve the environment.

CHAPTER II

Membership

Article 3

1. The Organisation is made up of fifty-seven State members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and other States which may accede to this Charter in accordance with Article 3 paragraph 2.
2. Any State, member of the United Nations, having Muslim majority and abiding by the Charter, which submits an application for membership may join the Organisation if approved by consensus only by the Council of Foreign Ministers on the basis of the agreed criteria adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers.
3. Nothing in the present Charter shall undermine the present Member States' rights or privileges relating to membership or any other issues.

APPENDIX 4

Article 4

1. Decision on granting Observer status to a State, member of the United Nations, will be taken by the Council of Foreign Ministers by consensus only and on the basis of the agreed criteria by the Council of Foreign Ministers.
2. Decision on granting Observer status to an international organisation will be taken by the Council of Foreign Ministers by consensus only and on the basis of the agreed criteria by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

CHAPTER III

Organs

Article 5

The Organs of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference shall consist of:

1. Islamic Summit
2. Council of Foreign Ministers
3. Standing Committees
4. Executive Committee
5. International Islamic Court of Justice
6. Independent Permanent Commission of Human Rights
7. Committee of Permanent Representatives
8. General Secretariat
9. Subsidiary Organs
10. Specialised Institutions
11. Affiliated Institutions

CHAPTER IV

Islamic Summit

Article 6

The Islamic Summit is composed of Kings and Heads of State and Government of Member States and is the supreme authority of the Organisation.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Article 7

The Islamic Summit shall deliberate, take policy decisions and provide guidance on all issues pertaining to the realisation of the objectives as provided for in the Charter and consider other issues of concern to the Member States and the Ummah.

Article 8

1. The Islamic Summit shall convene every three years in one of the Member States.
2. The Preparation of the Agenda and all necessary arrangements for the convening of the Summit will be done by the Council of Foreign Ministers with the assistance of the General Secretariat.

Article 9

Extraordinary Sessions will be held, whenever the interests of Ummah warrant it, to consider matters of vital importance to the Ummah and coordinate the policy of the Organisation accordingly. An Extraordinary Session may be held at the recommendation of the Council of Foreign Ministers or on the initiative of one of the Member States or the Secretary-General, provided that such initiative obtains the support of simple majority of the Member States.

CHAPTER V

Council of Foreign Ministers

Article 10

1. The Council of Foreign Ministers shall be convened once a year in one of the Member States.
2. An Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers may be convened at the initiative of any Member State or of the Secretary-General if such initiative is approved by a simple majority of the Member States.
3. The Council of Foreign Ministers may recommend convening other sectorial Ministerial meetings to deal with the specific issues of concern to the Ummah. Such meetings shall submit their reports to the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers.

APPENDIX 4

4. The Council of Foreign Ministers shall consider the means for the implementation of the general policy of the Organisation by:
 - a. Adopting decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest in the implementation of the objectives and the general policy of the Organisation;
 - b. Reviewing progress of the implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted at the previous Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers;
 - c. Considering and approving the programme, budget and other financial and administrative reports of the General Secretariat and Subsidiary Organs;
 - d. Considering any issue affecting one or more Member States whenever a request to that effect by the Member State concerned is made with a view to taking appropriate measures in that respect;
 - e. Recommending to establish any new organ or committee;
 - f. Electing the Secretary General and appointing the Assistant Secretaries General in accordance with Articles 16 and 18 of the Charter respectively;
 - g. Considering any other issue it deems fit.

CHAPTER VI

Standing Committees

Article 11

1. In order to advance issues of critical importance to the Organisation and its Member States, the Organisation has formed the following Standing Committees:
 - i. Al Quds Committee
 - ii. Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC)
 - iii. Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC)
 - iv. Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).
2. The Standing Committees are chaired by Kings and Heads of State and Government and are established in accordance with decisions

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

of the Summit or upon the recommendation of the Council of Foreign Ministers and the membership of such Committees.

CHAPTER VII Executive Committee

Article 12

The Executive Committee is comprised of the Chairmen of the current, preceding and succeeding Islamic Summits and Councils of Foreign Ministers, the host country of the Headquarters of the General Secretariat as well as the Secretary-General as an ex—officio member. The Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be conducted according to its Rules of Procedure.

CHAPTER VIII Committee of Permanent Representatives

Article 13

The prerogatives and modes of operation of the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall be defined by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

CHAPTER IX International Islamic Court of Justice

Article 14

The International Islamic Court of Justice established in Kuwait in 1987 shall, upon the entry into force of its Statute, be the principal judicial organ of the Organisation.

CHAPTER X Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights

Article 15

The Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights shall promote the civil, political, social and economic rights enshrined in the

APPENDIX 4

organisation's covenants and declarations and in universally agreed human rights instruments, in conformity with Islamic values.

CHAPTER XI

General Secretariat

Article 16

The General Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General, who shall be the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organisation and such staff as the Organisation requires. The Secretary-General shall be elected by the Council of Foreign Ministers for a period of five years, renewable once only. The Secretary-General shall be elected from among nationals of the Member States in accordance with the principles of equitable geographical distribution, rotation and equal opportunity for all Member States with due consideration to competence, integrity and experience.

Article 17

The Secretary General shall assume the following responsibilities:

- a. bring to the attention of the competent organs of the Organisation matters which, in his opinion, may serve or impair the objectives of the Organisation;
- b. follow-up the implementation of decisions, resolutions and recommendations of the Islamic Summits, and Councils of Foreign Ministers and other Ministerial meetings;
- c. provide the Member States with working papers and memoranda, in implementation of the decisions, resolutions and recommendations of the Islamic Summits and the Councils of Foreign Ministers;
- d. coordinate and harmonise, the work of the relevant Organs of the Organisation;
- e. prepare the programme and the budget of the General Secretariat;
- f. promote communication among Member States and facilitate consultations and exchange of views as well as the dissemination of information that could be of importance to Member States;
- g. perform such other functions as are entrusted to him by the Islamic Summit or the Council of Foreign Ministers;
- h. submit annual reports to the Council of Foreign Ministers on the work of the Organisation.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Article 18

1. The Secretary-General shall submit nominations of Assistant Secretaries General to the Council of Foreign Ministers, for appointment, for a period of 5 years in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and with due regard to the competence, integrity and dedication to the objectives of the Charter. One post of Assistant Secretary General shall be devoted to the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and Palestine with the understanding that the State of Palestine shall designate its candidate.
2. The Secretary-General may, for the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the Islamic Summits and the Councils of Foreign Ministers, appoint Special Representatives. Such appointments along with mandates of the Special Representatives shall be made with the approval of the Council of Foreign Ministers.
3. The Secretary-General shall appoint the staff of the General Secretariat from among nationals of Member States, paying due regard to their competence, eligibility, integrity and gender in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Secretary-General may appoint experts and consultants on temporary basis.

Article 19

In the performance of their duties, the Secretary-General, Assistant Secretaries General and the staff of the General Secretariat shall not seek or accept instructions from any government or authority other than the Organisation. They shall refrain from taking any action that may be detrimental to their position as international officials responsible only to the Organisation. Member States shall respect this exclusively international character, and shall not seek to influence them in any way in the discharge of their duties.

Article 20

The General Secretariat shall prepare the meetings of the Islamic Summits and the Councils of Foreign Ministers in close cooperation with the host country insofar as administrative and organizational matters are concerned.

APPENDIX 4

Article 21

The Headquarters of the General Secretariat shall be in the city of Jeddah until the liberation of the city of Al-Quds so that it will become the permanent Headquarters of the Organisation.

CHAPTER XII

Article 22

The Organisation may establish Subsidiary Organs, Specialised Institutions and Grant affiliated status, after approval of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in accordance with the Charter.

Subsidiary Organs

Article 23

Subsidiary organs are established within the framework of the Organisation in accordance with the decisions taken by the Islamic Summit or Council of Foreign Ministers and their budgets shall be approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

CHAPTER XIII

Specialised Institutions

Article 24

Specialised institutions of the Organisation are established within the framework of the Organisation in accordance with the decisions of the Islamic Summit or Council of Foreign Ministers. Membership of the specialised institutions shall be optional and open to members of the Organisation. Their budgets are independent and are approved by their respective legislative bodies stipulated in their Statute.

Affiliated Institutions

Article 25

Affiliated institutions are entities or bodies whose objectives are in line with the objectives of this Charter, and are recognised as affiliated

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

institutions by the Council of Foreign Ministers. Membership of the institutions is optional and open to organs and institutions of the Member States. Their budgets are independent of the budget of the General Secretariat and those of subsidiary organs and specialised institutions. Affiliated institutions may be granted observer status by virtue of a resolution of the Council of Foreign Ministers. They may obtain voluntary assistance from the subsidiary organs or specialised institutions as well as from Member States.

CHAPTER XIV

Cooperation with Islamic and other Organizations

Article 26

The Organisation will enhance its cooperation with the Islamic and other Organisations in the service of the objectives embodied in the present Charter.

CHAPTER XV

Peaceful Settlement of Disputes

Article 27

The Member States, parties to any dispute, the continuance of which may be detrimental to the interests of the Islamic Ummah or may endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, seek a solution by good offices, negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement or other peaceful means of their own choice. In this context, good offices may include consultation with the Executive Committee and the Secretary-General.

Article 28

The Organisation may cooperate with other international and regional organisations with the objective of preserving international peace and security, and settling disputes through peaceful means.

APPENDIX 4
CHAPTER XVI
Budget & Finance

Article 29

1. The budget of the General Secretariat and Subsidiary Organs shall be borne by Member States proportionate to their national incomes.
2. The Organisation may, with the approval of the Islamic Summit or the Council of Foreign Ministers, establish special funds and endowments (waqfs) on voluntary basis as contributed by Member States, individuals and Organisations. These funds and endowments shall be subjected to the Organisation's financial system and shall be audited by the Finance Control Organ annually.

Article 30

The General Secretariat and subsidiary organs shall administer their financial affairs according to the Financial Rules of Procedure approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers.

Article 31

1. A Permanent Finance Committee shall be set up by the Council of Foreign Ministers from the accredited representatives of the participating Member States which shall meet at the Headquarters of the Organisation to finalize the programme and budget of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs in accordance with the rules approved by the Council of Foreign Ministers.
2. The Permanent Finance Committee shall present an annual report to the Council of Foreign Ministers which shall consider and approve the programme and budget.
3. The Finance Control Organ comprising financial/auditing experts from the Member States shall undertake the audit of the General Secretariat and its subsidiary organs in accordance with its internal rules and regulations.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

CHAPTER XVII

Rules of Procedure and Voting

Article 32

1. The Council of Foreign Ministers shall adopt its own rules of procedure.
2. The Council of Foreign Ministers shall recommend the rules of procedures of the Islamic Summit.
3. The Standing Committees shall establish their own respective rules of procedure.

Article 33

1. Two-third of the Member States shall constitute the quorum for the meetings of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.
2. Decisions shall be taken by consensus. If consensus cannot be obtained, decision shall be taken by a two-third majority of members present and voting unless otherwise stipulated in this Charter.

CHAPTER XVIII

Final Provisions Privileges and Immunities

Article 34

1. The Organisation shall enjoy in the Member States, immunities and privileges as necessary for the exercise of its functions and the fulfilment of its objectives.
2. Representatives of the Member States and officials of the Organisation shall enjoy such privileges and immunities as stipulated in the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of 1976.
3. The staff of the General Secretariat, subsidiary organs and specialised institutions shall enjoy privileges and immunities necessary for the performance of their duties as may be agreed between the Organisation and host countries.
4. A Member State which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the Council

APPENDIX 4

of Foreign Ministers if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years. The Council may, nevertheless, permit such a Member to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member.

Withdrawal

Article 35

1. Any Member State may withdraw from the Organisation by notifying the Secretary-General one year prior to its withdrawal. Such a notification shall be communicated to all Member States.
2. The State applying for withdrawal shall be bound by its obligations until the end of the fiscal year during which the application for withdrawal is submitted. It shall also settle any other financial dues it owes to the Organisation.

Amendments

Article 36

Amendments to the present Charter shall take place according to the following procedure:

- a. Any Member State may propose amendments to the present Charter to the Council of Foreign Ministers;
- b. When approved by two-third majority of the Council of Foreign Ministers and ratified by a two-third majority of the Member States, it shall come into force.

Interpretation

Article 37

1. Any dispute that may arise in the interpretation, application or implementation of any Article in the present Charter shall be settled cordially, and in all cases through consultation, negotiation, reconciliation or arbitration;
2. The provisions of this Charter shall be implemented by the Member States in conformity with their constitutional requirements.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Article 38

Languages of the Organisation shall be Arabic, English and French.

Transitional Arrangement

RATIFICATION AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

Article 39

1. This Charter shall be adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers by two-third majority and shall be open for signature and ratification by Member States in accordance with the constitutional procedures of each Member State.
2. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary General of the Organisation.
3. This Charter replaces the Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference which was registered in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations on February 1, 1974.

Done at the city of Dakar (Republic of Senegal), the Seventh day of Rabi Al-Awal,

One Thousand Four Hundred and Twenty-nine Hijra, corresponding to Fourteenth day of March Two Thousand and Eight.

APPENDIX 5

Mecca Declaration on the Iraqi Situation (20 October 2006)

Praise and Glory be to Almighty God, and May His Peace and Blessings be Upon His Prophet Mohamed and all his Kin and Companions.

In view of the present situation in Iraq, where bloodshed is widespread, and where aggression on assets and property, perpetrated under the guise of Islam, is daily occurrence, and in response to the invitation of the Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and under the umbrella of the OIC International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA),

We the scholars of Iraq, from both the Sunnis and the Shiites, having met in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in Ramadan of the Lunar Hijra year of 1427H (2006) and deliberated on the situation in Iraq and the disastrous plight of the Iraqi people, issue and proclaim the following Declaration:

I. The Muslim is he who professes his faith by bearing witness that there is no God but Allah and that Mohamed is His Prophet. These fundamental principles apply equally to the Sunnis and the Shiites without exception. The common grounds between the two schools of thought are many times more than areas of difference and their causes. Any differences between them are merely differences of opinion and interpretation and not essential differences of faith or on the substance of the Pillars of Islam. From the Islamic Shari'a viewpoint, no one follower of either schools may excommunicate, heretiate, or in any other way cast aspersions on the faith and fidelity of a follower of the other school, on the grounds that God's Prophet (PBUH) said:

'If ever one of you calls his brother: You infidel, one of them shall come out the infidel and bear the onus thereof!'

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

II. The blood, property, honor, and reputation of Muslims is sacrosanct on the grounds of the noble verses of the Holy Quran, in which Almighty God says:

'And whoever deliberately and with premeditation kills a believer, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the Wrath and the Curse of God are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him'; and the Immaculate Tradition of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH), which says:

'Everything pertaining to the Muslim is sacrosanct, including his blood, property, honor, and reputation.'

Therefore, no Muslim, whether he or she is Shiite or Sunni, may be subject to murder or any harm, intimidation, terrorisation, or aggression on his property; incitement thereto; or forcible displacement, deportation, or kidnapping. Moreover, no member of his family may be held hostage on grounds of religious or sectarian belonging. Whoever perpetrates such acts shall fall from the fold and grace of the whole Ummah, including all Muslim authorities, scholars, and all believers.

III. All houses of worship are sacrosanct, including mosques and the non-Muslim houses of worship of all faiths and religions. Therefore, these places of worship may not be attacked, appropriated, or in any other way used as a haven to perpetrate acts in contravention of our magnanimous Shari'a. Instead, they should remain entirely at the disposal of their owners who should regain total and unfettered access to them in application of the Muslim jurisprudential rule adopted by all Islamic schools that:

'All religious endowments and Awqaf shall be subject to the terms and conditions established by their owners'

that: '*a condition stipulated by the Donor shall be treated just as a Shari'a rule';*

and that: '*That which is part of practice and custom shall be deemed as a contractual provision.'*

IV. The crimes committed on sight on grounds of sectarian identity or belonging, such as those now being perpetrated in Iraq, fall within the ambit of 'wickedness, and mischief on the earth', which was prohibited and proscribed by Almighty God when He said:

'When he turns his back, His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But God loveth not mischief.'

APPENDIX 5

The espousal of a school of thought, whatever it may be, is not a justification for killing or aggression, even if some followers of that school commit a punishable act since:

'A bearer of burdens cannot bear another's burdens.'

V. Any provocation of sensitivities or sectarian, ethnic, geographical, or linguistic strife should be shunned and averted. Similarly, any name-calling, abuse, or vilification and invectives uttered by any one party in attack on another should be avoided in view of the express prohibition by the Holy Quran, which labeled such conduct as 'blasphemy':

'Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by offensive nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness used of one after he has believed: And those who do not desist are indeed wrong doers.'

VI. Certain things and principles should never be forfeited, including in particular, the unity, cohesion, cooperation, and solidarity in piety and righteousness, which should all be preserved and protected against any attempt to tear them asunder, for Almighty God said:

'The Believers are but a single Brotherhood' and He also said:

'Truly! This Ummah of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me.'

Necessarily therefore, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to adopt caution and vigilance against all attempts to sow division among them, break their ranks, or incite sedition, strife, and hate to corrupt their divine spiritual bonds with each other.

VII. Muslims, both Sunnis and the Shiites all in unison champion the cause of the persecuted and unite against the oppressor and the unjust, as they act in application of Almighty God's words:

'Verily, God enjoins justice, righteousness and good deeds, charity and assistance to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds, injustice, and oppression. He admonishes you, that you may take heed.'

Accordingly, our endeavors should seek to put an end to all injustices, including most particularly by ensuring the release of all innocent prisoners and hostages, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, and the return of the displaced to their original homes.

VIII. The scholars remind the Iraqi Government of its duty to provide security, protection and means of decent livelihood to all categories and sections of the Iraqi people and to uphold justice among them, principally, by ensuring the release of innocent detainees, by bringing to speedy and fair trial, and executing the ruling against, those indicted

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

of crime, while observing strictly the principle of equality among all citizens.

IX. The Sunnite and Shiite scholars support all efforts aimed at achieving comprehensive national reconciliation in Iraq in accordance with the words of the Almighty God:

'Reconciliation is best' and *'Help ye one another in righteousness and piety.'*

X. Muslims, whether Sunnite or Shiite, will thus stand united in protecting the independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq; realizing and consecrating the free will of the Iraqi people, contributing to the military, economic, and political capacity-building of their country in order to put an end to occupation and restore and reinstate Iraq's Arab-Islamic and human cultural and civilisational role.

The scholars who have signed this Declaration appeal to all Muslim scholars to support its provisions and urge the Muslims of Iraq to pledge adherence to it. They pray to Almighty God, on this sacred soil and blessed grounds, to protect and preserve the faith of all Muslims, ensure the safety of their homeland, and bring the Arab-Muslim country of Iraq out of its plight, end its trials and tribulations and reinstate Iraq as a fortress and pillar of the Muslim Ummah in the face of its enemies.

Our final and eternal prayer is always that Praise and Glory be to Almighty God, the Lord of the Universe and all worlds therein.

APPENDIX 6

Selected speeches of the Secretary General

Statement by Secretary General at the United Nations General Assembly's High Level Dialogue on Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Cooperation for Peace

New York, 5 October 2007

Mr. President,

As this is the first time that I address the General Assembly this year, allow me to extend to you my sincere congratulations for your election to preside over the deliberation of the General Assembly. I would also like to seize this opportunity to convey to the Secretary General of the UN, the Honorable Ban Ki Moon, my felicitation for this well-deserved election to this sublime post and for his wise leadership. I would also like to assure them of the OIC's full support and cooperation as they carry out their important tasks.

We have been listening with great attention to the general and rich debate that started yesterday, on the subject of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace.

I have no intention to repeat what those who preceded me have said. I would rather say that there is an overwhelming agreement on the importance of interreligious and intercultural understanding in peace building and ensuring security and prosperity in the world.

We, in the OIC, fully subscribe to this conclusion. We have expressed our thanks and gratitude for the two sponsors, Pakistan and the Philippines, of this highly appreciated initiative, as its subject matter is presently of great concern to the international community, and constitutes one of the greatest challenges for humanity.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

It is, also, on the same premise that we have welcomed the idea of Alliance of Civilization, which is gaining momentum. We have already committed ourselves to work diligently to ensure its success.

Being involved in this issue of civilization dialogue for almost ten years, and being the initiator of Dialogue among civilizations since 1998, the OIC has succeeded in placing this issue on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We were also gratified when this august Assembly declared the year 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and organised, to that end, many activities and programs around the world to mark that occasion. We now feel very satisfied to see that this issue has started to occupy a prominent place among the major concerns of the international community and to see this rich multiplication of interfaith dialogue.

Our high-level meeting today is another manifestation of this importance.

Having said that, we cannot but admit that getting from the phase of debating to that of concrete action is still lacking. Very few programs or projects have found their way to implementation; fewer attempts have been taken to address conflicts based on the foundations of a faith.

That is why we firmly believe that interfaith dialogue or understanding should not remain an empty slogan without substance.

We badly need practical and concrete measures to address this issue upon which depend the fate of peace and security in the world.

It is from this vantage view that we have welcomed the new agenda of the Alliance of Civilizations, which is focused on addressing the issues of youth, education, media, and immigration, from a practical angle, there is no doubt that these issues represent a serious source of friction in international relations.

In the same vein, we believe that there is no alternative to dialogue. Dialogue is the only way to understanding. It is indispensable in building bridges and as a means of communication between religions and cultures. It is a must in promoting awareness to the necessity of understanding, confidence building, and ushering the world towards peace, security, and harmony.

It seems to us that there are deficiencies in conceiving or conducting dialogue. Some among us talk of dialogue for the sake of dialogue and nothing beyond that. Others speak of dialogue without any political will to reach a real positive result. Some groups do not see the neces-

APPENDIX 6

sity to practice a dialogue based on a parity of esteem for different traditions or cultures. Others claim to exclusively represent the truth or to be superior to others.

On the basis of these considerations, or others, we found ourselves unable to forge ahead as we all expected.

To remedy these shortcomings, we believe that the purpose of inter-faith dialogue should not be geared towards reaching doctrinal agreements, but rather to increase sensitivity towards and appreciation of the other.

Dialogue should also be founded on values shared by all in the contemporary world.

It should be practiced at local, regional, and international levels, and should have a wide scope, as inclusive as possible, reaching all sectors of civil societies.

Moreover, dialogue should aim towards ethical globalisation, in which each civilization maintains its identity as it contributes to creating a spirit of shared humanity and respect for all. In this context of ethics, we in the OIC have called for a practical measure to reduce tensions with regards to one of the thorniest issues facing the world, aiming to ensure respect for all religions and beliefs. We have called for action to forbid incitement to religious hatred. In doing so, we will stem the provocative attempts that poison the relations between the adherents of different religions, under the guise of freedom of expression.

At a time when many are hailing the spirit of interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue, and the acknowledgement of diversity, many Muslims around the world are experiencing circumstances that are far from celebration or acknowledgement. Wide-ranging campaigns of hate speeches are sweeping large areas where Islam, as a religion, is being attacked, and denigrated, and where Muslims are facing injustices and discrimination. I am referring to Islamophobia. Western institutions monitoring Islamophobia in Europe are unanimous in reporting that Islamophobia is on the rise and that there has emerged a new form of discrimination based on the hatred of Islam.

I have not evoked this as a complaint, but rather to highlight the relevance and importance of our meeting today. When we talk about Islamophobia, we are not dealing with words but with real facts on the ground.

I think that everybody agrees that the present tense relationship between the Muslim world and the West, inspired by political, cultural,

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

and religious factors, constitutes one of the major threats to peace and security in the world.

To address this highly disturbing issue on a practical basis, I have repeatedly called for an urgent need for Islam and Christianity to agree on a historic reconciliation which will bring Islam and Christianity closer together, eliminate ancient grudges and pave the way for a promising future. A few decades ago, we saw this attempt happening between Christianity and Judaism. In this age of globalisation a historic reconciliation between Islam and Christianity will be an event of resounding historic proportion affecting almost half of humanity. The two great religions of the world cannot afford to leave their relationship to be defined according to antiquated antagonistic paradigms. If we manage to clear this major obstacle, we are confident that the entire world will be safer, more peaceful, and prosperous.

Let us work, Ladies and Gentlemen, together to promote peace and social cohesion. Let us endeavor to foster freedom of religion and belief, to overcome extremism, stereotypes, prejudices, ignorance and indifference. Let us be an instrument of God, of Peace, and of the unlimited ocean of love and harmony.

APPENDIX 6

Speech of Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu at the First Knowledge Conference Dubai, 28 October 2007

Your Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be part of this gathering of eminent personalities of Arab and Islamic thought specialised in the field of knowledge, who are meeting today upon the gracious invitation of the Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation, in order to deliberate on an issue of major concern for the Arab and Muslim worlds at this historical juncture, which is the future of knowledge work therein. Today's meeting comes in response to the urgent need and burning desire of every Arab and Muslim citizen for over two centuries to keep up with the march of advanced nations and gain access to new prospects of human progress and development.

In this invitation, there is so much innovation, renewal, and creativity, such an accurate diagnosis of our ills, and such a quest for recovery and healing that I am compelled, along with everyone else, to commend this creative initiative, which is not only expected to bear fruit for the Muslim world by promoting its prosperity, progress, and influence but also to benefit the State of the United Arab Emirates by strengthening its pioneering role and favoring its blissful abundance, good name, and well-established heritage in the service of the Arab and Muslim worlds. The benefits of this initiative are indeed sure to spill over in favor of the whole world.

That is why we must thank the Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation for organising this First Knowledge Conference that is to deliberate on the present reality and future prospects of knowledge work in the region. In addition, the objective of this conference is to recognise the challenges and opportunities of this work and identify optimal modalities to tackle them on the basis of an objective approach rooted in firm foundations of science and knowledge. So, thank you, thank you for this historic initiative. Our deep appreciation and gratitude go to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum for announcing the Dubai Cares Campaign in September 2007 aimed at sponsoring the education of children in the poorest countries of the world.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

The human race has entered the first decade of the new millennium, the age of the new and incredible advances driven by the engine and momentum of state-of-the-art information technology so much so that those who have knowledge and information today are capable of proving themselves and even imposing their will upon those who do not. The price of ignorance has been costly and can only be offset by the highly rewarding dividends of knowledge. Experience has shown that there is a close correlation between progress in science and knowledge in a given country and its level of development to such an extent that these two indicators have become inescapable correlates, just as the living reality has shown that there can be no progress or prosperity in the absence of freedom of thought or without interacting and keeping up to date with international advances.

Therefore, innovating think tanks have become a national asset that should be protected and fostered by providing the fertile ground needed for their growth and prosperity in their original environment.

We in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), as we prepared for the Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in December 2005, undertook a comprehensive assessment of the role of science and knowledge in the development and prosperity of nations throughout the ages and we showed that the Muslim *Ummah* was a progressive force in the world, when it was the first incubator of science and knowledge. A team of eminent Muslim scholars, thinkers, and seasoned statesmen and politicians, just like yourselves, who helped to prepare for that Summit reached results and conclusions rather akin to the premises upon which the Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation has been established, particularly for the purposes of its strategic themes and mission to 'bring about a renaissance in the spheres of knowledge and education; revolutionize the cultural reality of the *Ummah*; and achieve a world-class performance in business and job creation.'

A programme of work, known as the OIC Ten-year Programme of Action, was adopted by that Summit, which is being implemented over the course of ten years in order to achieve the development of the Muslim *Ummah* and empower it to recuperate from its present state of lethargy. That large-scale reform programme is based on a new vision to confront the challenges of the Twenty-first century that addresses both the intellectual and political domains yet strengthens the bonds of Islamic solidarity in action and caters for the call for moderation, good governance, and human rights.

APPENDIX 6

The programme—in its Science and Technology part—is based on improving and reforming educational institutions and curricula; encouraging Research and Development (R&D) programmes by allocating at least 1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of each country to that end; encouraging national government and private research centers and institutions to invest in technological capacity-building; and reviewing the performance of university institutions in the OIC Member States. In this context, the OIC is working to enhance the ranking of twenty universities in the Muslim world to that of 500 world-distinguished universities, among other things, by accommodating outstanding, highly-qualified Muslim scholars and keeping them within the Muslim world through a comprehensive strategy to benefit from their competence and the institution of a scientific excellence awards programme. Even so, that programme did not overlook the issue of women and youth emancipation and of enhancing and promoting their role.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through this brief account of the OIC efforts in this context, I wanted to allude to the meeting points of our action with the commendable activities and mission of this forum in this auspicious day that heralds the birth of an enlightened era.

Today, it is high time for the Muslim *Ummah* to catch up with the accelerating pace of modern global civilization that we have had the merit to help build up. Yet we do now lag far behind in many of the domains of this global revolution, latest of which has been the revolution of knowledge and technology that is creating an ever-increasing Digital Divide between nations.

We must not repeat the same mistake we made when we lagged behind the industrial revolution of the Nineteenth century, for which we are still paying a heavy price. Suffice it to mention the facts revealed by human-development reports in the Arab and Muslim worlds published by international organizations. Among the bitterest and most disturbing of these facts is the spread of illiteracy and ignorance in our worlds as well as the growing number of illiterates in today's world compared to the situation prevailing in the last century. The reports of specialised OIC institutions indicate that thirty-six out of the fifty-seven OIC countries are suffering a poverty rate of 20 to 60 per cent

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

while illiteracy is spreading in thirty-six of these countries at a rate of 20 to 81 per cent.

The knowledge situation in the Muslim world—in its various forms—shows us the great hidden potential of our societies to create a quantum leap in the scientific field. Thus, whereas we find one European country with a population of no more than four million, publishing technical and scientific journals equal to those produced by one third of our countries, we find, in contrast, that one of the OIC countries has been able in recent years to climb up on the scale of scientific publications to surpass many European countries to the ranking of 18th and earn a position among the top twenty countries in the scientific citation index, which shows objectively and statistically the knowledge world ranking of countries in terms of innovative scientific production. In this way, this Muslim country has multiplied the scientific citation index by a factor of forty-six and at the same time increased the number of scientific publications by a factor of twenty-five in the last twenty-five years.

These facts compel us to reconsider our knowledge reality and human potential and perform an objective diagnosis of our situation, away from any of the ideological influences that contributed to shaping the cultural pattern of the Muslim world and molded the intellectual and cultural system prevailing therein in the recent past, thus exacerbating the backwardness of our civilization as it failed to adequately address the need to draw up development projects and programmes to suit the countries of the Muslim world. Hence, scientific research and development projects, vocational education institutions, and technical colleges, which represent the middle link in the chain of industrial, agricultural, and commercial production, have simply been overlooked.

The objectives we aspire to achieve thanks to this gracious initiative have already been achieved by many countries and nations that have succeeded in keeping up with advanced nations. We should therefore study their experience in order to seek inspiration from their certain strengths and avoid any of their possible weaknesses. The road ahead for the desired renaissance has become clear and its requirements rather well-known.

Among these requirements there are the following:

Work to create the will for a comprehensive change for the better within the body of the Muslim *Ummah* in a way that makes this a collective demand.

APPENDIX 6

Develop a comprehensive study on the detailed vision of the humanitarian and global message that this initiative seeks to achieve in the service of the *Ummah*'s prosperity and civilization.

Maximize on the intellectual and rational capacities of the *Ummah* so as to achieve civilizational excellence.

Develop human resources and potential and harness them for development and progress because the minds of the *Ummah* are its capital.

Make use of powerful incentives that stimulate innovation and renaissance.

Mobilize the greatest number of researchers, experts, and innovators and recruit such specialists from other countries to work on innovative studies and research and develop existing research materials.

Inculcate the spirit of selfless sacrifice in young generations so as to empower them to catch up with their peers in advanced countries and stimulate competitiveness to motivate great scientific conquests.

Identify development issues and marshal sciences, knowledge, and innovative technologies for implementation in prescribed fields.

Identify priorities in development fields and allocate budgets according to predefined priorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are a nation that has started its history with the divine commandment: 'Read!' and the principle: 'God has taught man what he knew not.' On these parameters of the quest for knowledge and going on the learning journey wherever learning may be offered, our nation has been built. It is therefore incumbent upon us and of imperative necessity that we should rise above this crisis.

Today, as we meet in this august assembly, we do so in order to transcend our past and bridge the deep Digital Divide that separates us from those who have forged ahead of us by fostering the fertile ground needed to attract scientific brains, keep them, and create the right climate for excellence and innovation and for scientific research by specialised institutions as well as for the realization of real development and prosperity.

All this we do owe to this pioneering institution that is hosting this conference and before that to the perspicacious intellect and vision behind the foundation and behind this initiative. To the magnanimous and noble generosity of the leaders of this country who have showed their selfless dedication for the sake of their Arab and Muslim *Ummah*'s present and future, have proved their loyalty and unique skills in the

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

management of public affairs, and demonstrated unsurpassable know-how in the process of progress and development as well as infinite skill in correctly reading the rationale and dictates of this day and age; to all of them we owe this much and we say again thank you, we appreciate you and we wish you total success and continued prosperity.

APPENDIX 6

Lecture of Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu at the Oxford Centre
for Islamic Studies

28 April 2008

Islam, An Essential Component of European Identity

Dr. Farhan Nizami, Director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies,
Distinguished Members of OCIS, Distinguished scholars, students
and guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and to Oxford Centre for European Studies for giving me this opportunity to speak at this prestigious institution about a topic which has attracted a lot of debate for many decades if not centuries, and still lies at the heart of a drawn-out discussion which has dominated relations between Islam and the West.

All through the history, the identities of entities and groups have been affected by the vicissitude of times, and by the changeable fortunes of peoples particularly as results of wars and revolutions.

This observation was vividly experienced in the aftermath of the major events which took place in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and in Central Asia, sparked and inspired by the demise of Communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

At that point, it was noticed that identity had assumed new dimensions, and appeared in various forms, which differed from what it used to be.

I believe that at a time when the topic of identity has gained such a prominence as an item of debate among politicians, scholars as well as public in broader sense, and when the new arguments are raised regarding the situation of Muslims in Europe, questioning the very identity of Europe should not be that superfluous endeavour.

It might also be that a proper reply to this questioning could even take us all forward towards a more harmonious and stronger Europe as an entity.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, dominant ideologies of the bi-polar world overwhelmed, reigned over and suppressed ethnic identities and nationalist aspirations to a great extent. With the demise of the Cold War and disappearance of its confines in the nineties, a new era was born in which assertion of ethnic aspirations and micro-

nationalist identity gained prominence over ideological affiliations of the past era.

This had an immediate effect on the course of international events and conduct of world affairs.

The downfall of once prevailing cold war ideologies unleashed micro-ethnic, nationalist movements based on distinguishable ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations, particularly in the Caucasus and South Eastern Europe.

These, somehow unexpected developments, had definite impact on a parallel process in Europe which had been bringing about the emergence of a new European regional identity and culture based on the policies and efforts within the European Union.

Understandably enough, after some strategic considerations, the efforts aiming at the creation of a modern, unique and over encompassing European identity were reoriented to serve as a panacea to the dangers of micro-ethnic and nationalist fervours, at the peripheries.

Naturally during this time of reckoning and redefinition for Europe, the situation of the Muslims in Europe had to be discussed, as it was understood that an expanded European Union would have in its folds millions of indigenous Muslims, in addition to the already existing millions of Muslims in many EU members who had immigrated to Europe in big numbers from other parts of the world, mainly from Muslim countries and former colonies. Within this picture, the 'Eastern Question' of the nineteenth century was in a way 'reincarnated' in the consideration of the 'Europeaness' of Muslims. It was interesting to see that let alone a recognition of the situation of the 2nd-3rd generation immigrants, some intellectual discussions even revisited the 'Europeaness' of some portions of the immigrant populations whose roots in Europe go back to the 19th century. The proponents of these arguments sometimes questioned the 'Europeaness' of even Bosniaks, Albanians, Kosovars, Romanian, Bulgarian Muslims and all other indigenous European Muslims. You might have noticed, in order not to make the debate more complicated, I am avoiding even mentioning the Greek citizens of Turkish origin in Western Thrace and Rhodes.

From one side various integration problems of the Muslim immigrants leads to discussions on whether they can really belong to the countries they migrated to, and from other side, their preservation of their own identities and cultures raises doubts whether they can be a part of European continent.

APPENDIX 6

After the tragic events of 9/11, 7/7, Madrid train bombing and some other developments whose culprits included some marginal extremist elements of the European Muslims, these academic and scholar discussions about the Europeanness of European Muslims has given way to a new heated discussion, however this time, with immediate and dramatic effects on the state and community level policies, on inter-communal relations in Europe, on perception of masses and media even on the course of conduct of overall relations between the states belonging to the Muslim World and states belonging to the Western World.

At this point, we should take a moment to reflect. The Muslims of Europe, do they actually belong to another peculiar world? For them is Europe a host or home? Is Europe a Christian entity or from one angle it has an Islamic component? Are Islam, Muslims and their cultures, intruders, outsiders and newcomers for Europe? What is the reality with respect to the cultural heritage, today's realities on the ground, geographical borders and demographic elements in Europe?

Let me elaborate my questions little bit further. Would Europe accept to be a continent for Muslims as well?

Do Muslims constitute a considerable principal demographic, intellectual and cultural component of the Continent? And as a Continent and a geographic entity, does it belong partly to the Muslim world? In other words, does Europe have a Muslim identity as well, besides its distinctive Christian identity, and the additional identity that Europe has come to assert, after World War II, as belonging to a civilization based on Judeo-Christian traditions? So can we say that Europe is a Christian-Muslim Continent or not?

In a recent meeting with the President of a European country, I raised these successive questions. The answer was: 'You are asking too much and demanding too much.' I now ask this question: Was that the correct or the right answer? Or is the correct answer just the opposite of this spontaneous one given by the European head of state?

In my humble opinion, were we to examine the issue more closely we would find out that we are not asking too much. Here, I would like to consider the reality in its intellectual dimension, best illustrated in the words of Prince Charles, Patron of this Centre, when he stated in his lecture delivered in 1993, and which still resonates here today:

.... we have underestimated the importance of 800 years of Muslim society and culture in Spain between the 8th and the 15th centuries. Not only did Muslim Spain gather and preserve the intellectual content of ancient Greek

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

and Roman civilization, it also interpreted and expanded upon that civilization, and made a vital contribution of its own in so many fields of human endeavor—in science, astronomy, mathematics, algebra (itself an Arabic word), law, history, medicine, pharmacology, optics, agriculture, architecture, theology, music.

Averroes and Avenzoor, like their counterparts Avicenna and Rhazes in the East, contributed to the study and practice of medicine in ways from which Europe benefited for centuries afterwards. Cordoba in the 10th century was by far the most civilized city in Europe. Many of the traits in which Europe prides itself came to it from Muslim Spain. Diplomacy, free trade, open borders, the techniques of academic research, of anthropology, etiquette, fashion, alternative medicine, hospitals, all came from this great city of cities.

Medieval Islam was a religion of remarkable tolerance for its time, allowing Jews and Christians to practice their inherited beliefs, and setting an example which was not, unfortunately, copied for many centuries in the West. The surprise, is the extent for which Islam has been a part of Europe for so long time, first in Spain, then in the Balkans, and the extent to which it has contributed so much towards the civilization which we all too often think of wrongly, as entirely Western. Islam is part of our past and present in all fields of human endeavor. It has helped to create modern Europe. It is part of our own inheritance, not a thing apart.

Here, I would like to voice my view that if we regard Cordoba in the tenth century as the most civilized city in Europe, at a later stage, in the Balkans, Ottoman Sarajevo was, until the end of the nineteenth century, by far the most tolerant city of Europe.

Does not this judgment from a well-known, illustrious European figure along with similar sound judgments and historical facts give unequivocal credit to the Muslims' comprehensive and far reaching contribution to Europe and Europeans in all walks of life, leaving permanent marks on their culture and existence? I believe that this quote is explicit enough regarding the importance of the intellectual dimension.

When we consider the geographic dimension and demographic reality, we find that Europe's boundaries include parts of the Muslim world, particularly in its Southern and Eastern regions. Demographically, Muslims of European ethnicity or indigenous Europeans, such as Albanians, Bosniaks, Pomaks, Torbesh, Roma, etc. (even excluding the Turks from the present debate on whether or not they belong to Europe) are all actually ethnicities of indigenous European origin. In addition, we should also not neglect the remaining Muslims of Spain and those who were forced to convert out of their religion then returned to Islam!

APPENDIX 6

Can we not see in all this, besides the millions of Muslims who have immigrated to Europe over past decades and who have become an important component of European societies and attained eminent positions, proof enough of a consolidated Muslim presence in Europe?

Here in this country, inspiring examples from large numbers of eminent British Muslim figures have acceded to Parliament and high ranking Government positions and headed key public departments. Does not this in itself represent a new demographic dimension in the continent of Europe?

Given that Islam today is the second-largest faith in Europe, embraced by so many Europeans, and given that our present-day civilization is not without strong Muslim roots, whether in the realm of science, philosophy, or the humanities, would it not be appropriate to qualify this civilization as 'Muslim-Christian'? Would it not be right to admit that Islam and Muslims constitute one of the key components of this Continent? And therefore, would affirming these facts be considered as asking too much?

I do realize that my theory may be difficult to accept for understandable reasons, but if this is indeed the real historic truth and the actual fact, do we not owe it to ourselves to raise such questions and seek appropriate answers for them?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After these questions which I felt duty-bound to share with you in this august forum, I would like to respond to the point raised by Dr. Farhan Nizami regarding the way the Organisation of the Islamic Conference views the future and Muslim solidarity.

During the last decade, the OIC Member States started to sense an urgent need to revitalize their Organization, and close ranks with a view to breaking free from the state of despondency and lack of joint action after a series of setbacks they suffered in various parts of the Muslim world.

The deterioration of the socio-economic situation in most of its countries, coupled with rampant poverty, unchecked illiteracy and uncertain future, compelled the Member States to seek remedies and solutions for these impediments through common and joint actions.

Their only intergovernmental organization, the OIC, was performing according to an obsolete agenda dating back to the seventies and its organizational capabilities were low.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Many calls for awakening and changing course were expressed, and culminated in adopting decisions in 2003 calling for taking concrete measures conducive to empowering the Muslim *Ummah* to face the challenges of the new millennium.

Faced with chronic political, socio-economic, cultural and scientific challenges with implications for its unity, peace, security and development, the Muslim world felt the need to cooperate in order to face these challenges and to take necessary initiatives to overcome them.

It has therefore decided to take joint actions within the framework of the OIC, based on common values and ideals so as to revive the Muslim *Ummah*'s pioneering role as a fine example of tolerance and enlightened moderation, and a force for international peace and harmony.

Conscious of these challenges and anxious to bring the Muslim world out of its present situation into a new reality marked by greater solidarity and more prosperity, the Saudi Monarch, King Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz called upon the leaders of the Muslim Ummah to convene an Extraordinary Conference of the leaders of the OIC Member States to consider the issues of solidarity and joint Islamic action.

As a result, in December 2005, an extraordinary OIC Summit was held in Makkah with the aim of taking specific actions to tackle the political, economic, cultural, and social impediments hindering the advancement of the Muslim Ummah. As an innovation within the OIC system, the Summit was preceded by a meeting of scholars from different walks of life to provide their inputs as to the challenges and remedies.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in light of demands of the leaders, scholars and public for reform in the expression and modalities of solidarity and joint action among the Muslim nations under the banner of the OIC, prepared a Ten-Year Programme of Action, which constituted a paradigm-shift with a practical and realistic timetable in order to ensure attaining the requested goals. This document, which is considered as the blueprint of reform in the Muslim World, was adopted unanimously by the leaders of the fifty-seven OIC member states at the Makkah Summit.

This Programme of Action has been elaborated to deal with the most pressing challenges facing the Muslim world today, and to work out the ways and means to address them in an objective and realistic way. Foremost among these measures are strengthening the bonds of solidarity in action and cooperation among the Member States, instilling the value of moderation and tolerance among the youth, while

APPENDIX 6

combating extremism, violence and terrorism, and countering the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

In the economic and scientific field, effective strategy was envisaged to achieve higher levels of development and prosperity given the abundant economic resources and capacities in the Muslim world with special attention to the most affected countries, mainly Africa, due to poverty, disease, illiteracy, famine and debt burden.

The Programme foresees special emphasis on education and culture, with a view to tackle the spread of illiteracy, and enhancing the efforts aiming at elevating the curricula of teaching the science and technology to achieve intellectual excellence, while focusing on the empowerment of women, and the adequate upbringing of youth.

The Ten-Year Programme of Action also called for updating and overhauling the old Charter of the Organisation, to endow it with fresh new visions and objectives.

Accordingly, in record time, considering the experiences of other international organizations, a new draft amended Charter was introduced at the 11th OIC Summit held in Dakar in March 2008, and was adopted. Thus it became the guiding charter for the future work of the OIC and all its Member States.

As is expected, the new Charter has also been based on the new vision and its objectives, which respond to the aspirations of all Muslims, the world over, and enable them to act and perform in harmony with the needs and requirements of the Twenty-first Century.

A special emphasis in the new Charter is placed on the preservation and promotion of Muslim values of peace and compassion as well as actively contributing to international peace and security, while promoting understanding and dialogue among civilizations, cultures, and religions.

The new Charter also calls on the Muslim world to foster the values of moderation, respect of diversity, and tolerance. In this regard, our International Academy of Islamic Jurisprudence has been reformed and equipped with the means to promote and disseminate the principle of tolerance while combating extremism. It has also been entrusted with monitoring and rationalising Fatwa rulings with the aim of putting an end to arbitrary rulings issued by a minority of fanatic uneducated elements.

On the home front, the amended Charter reiterates the commitment of the Muslim world to promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms, good governance, rule of law, and accountability.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

According to the new OIC Charter, in the economic domain, the states of the Muslim world will be working to promote cooperation in order to achieve sustained, comprehensive, human, socio-economic development and realise effective integration in the global economy, as well as to strengthen intra-OIC economic and trade cooperation.

Our new vision, which has been concretised in both the Ten Year Programme of Action and the new Charter, aims to raise the capabilities of the Organisation and powers of the Secretary General so that the Organisation can play a more active role in the settlement of political conflicts as well as in addressing peace, security and humanitarian matters in full partnership with the international community.

The action towards realisation of the new vision and of all its objectives has already started in earnest since the adoption of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action in December 2005. Within the new parameters, we have been fully engaged in endeavouring to develop road maps and frameworks to implement projects in the fields of human rights and good governance, women, children issues. Emphasis is being given to building capacity at the OIC General Secretariat to develop and implement, in cooperation with the member states, OIC institutions, international organisations and NGOs, concrete projects in humanitarian assistance, food security, sustainable socio-economic development, higher education, health, environment and science and technology areas.

We have paid special attention to align the priorities of the Ten Year Program of Action with those of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

As we speak, a fund for eradicating poverty in the Member States has been established with a targeted capital of US\$ 10 Billion. A Special Programme for the Development of Africa is being elaborated. From the sad orphans of tsunami-hit Banda Aceh to the desperate drought-stricken farmers of Niger have already started to feel the positive impact of our projects.

We have been organising intergovernmental meetings, academic conferences and workshops with a declared target of opening channels of political engagement with the Western countries. Since 2006, we have already organised and sponsored important meetings in Wilton Park and at Georgetown University.

We have been supporting the initiatives of the Member States aiming at contributing to fostering understanding and tolerance and furthering

APPENDIX 6

interfaith dialogue. We have been engaging on a bilateral basis with the Western Governments through contacts and visits, seeking ways and means of furthering cooperation with international and regional organisations, participating at all relevant international conferences and meetings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are some of the goals which the OIC is trying to achieve, as the sole representative and only spokesman of the Muslim world.

On the international front, we, in the OIC, are doing our best to disseminate the true and correct teachings of Islam while trying to raise awareness of the unhealthy climate generated by some extremist elements in the West and the Muslim World who are trying hard to damage relations between the West and Islam. Here I do not want to dwell on the recent proliferation of denigrating caricatures and films aiming at inciting hatred against Islam and Muslims.

However, at this point I would like to share with you my strong concern that unless a comprehensive joint action plan is adopted and implemented by the leaders of the Western and Muslim countries with a sense of urgency, commitment and political will, to stop the perceived rising animosity and attacks of incitement targeting Islam and Muslims in the West, we are probably heading towards more troubling times. Without this urgent attention, we would not be able to talk about a healthy dialogue among civilizations, and transforming the dialogue into an Alliance of Civilizations would be much more elusive.

We are deeply convinced that the story of present-day West-Muslim relations is the story of misinformation and misrepresentation which allows extremist minorities on both sides to take these relations hostage.

There is a need for increased emphasis on understanding through dialogue and propagating unbiased information and true knowledge.

It is in this context that I have always called for Historical Reconciliation between Islam and the West as was done between Christianity and Judaism.

Our challenge in the modern age is two-fold, to reclaim the roots of our common religions as a way to peace and concord, and at the same time to facilitate progressive dialogue between Islam and the West. Both challenges are inter-related and must be addressed together. We should share the one and only thing that we need; mainly peace and

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

stability for all human beings and free will for human kind, in order to be able to live in a better-deserved world. Tolerance and understanding will be our cardinal instrument in this endeavour. Our struggle should be a struggle for better ideas and nobler values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to voice my hope that with the continuation of gatherings of prominent scholars, opinion formers and public figures from the West and Muslim World under the fold of respectable institutions such as the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, whose contribution to the academic studies on the role of Islamic heritage would surely multiply soon once its infrastructural project is completed, the essential role of the Islamic heritage in the evolution of the Western Civilization would be appreciated and understood more by masses, and a more informed understanding of Islam, its culture and civilisation could be promoted in a way to support the efforts of the international diplomacy and media towards the creation of a more positive connotation in the relations of Muslim and Western Worlds, from which all humanity would benefit.

It has been a memorable occasion for me to be with you in this pioneering institute of academic excellence. I would like to express my gratitude once more for the invitation.

I thank you sincerely for your attention and patience.

APPENDIX 6

Keynote Address of Prof. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu at the opening session of the OIC Inter-Institutional Forum on ‘Universal Shared Values: Challenges & New Paradigms’

UNO, Geneva, 19 December 2008

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General of the UN Office in Geneva;
Madam Vice President of the Human Rights Council;
Madam High Commissioner on Human Rights;
Excellencies; Honorable Invitees; Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to welcome you all to this OIC inter-institutional Forum on Universal Shared Values: Challenges and New Paradigm, which is organised to commemorate and celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I would like at the outset to pay tribute to H. E. President Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and Chairman of the OIC Summit for kindly providing his patronage and support.

Mr. Director General, let me also sincerely thank you and your staff for your valuable support and for the excellent facilities provided to us on this occasion.

I would also like to thank the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Vice President of the Human Rights Council for being with us this morning.

In organising this Forum, the objective of the OIC has been to give opportunity to all stakeholders from intergovernmental organisations, UN specialised agencies, government representatives and civil society institutions to make their own assessment on the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and submit appropriate solutions to address the new challenges that we face in promotion of human rights and cultural diversity.

The OIC sees the Universal Declaration as more than a treaty. It is a powerful statement of common standards and shared values; an extension of the UN Charter; the basis for the International Bill of Human Rights; and part of the international customary law. It is remarkable that the Declaration generates political consensus, despite the ideological, religious, intellectual and the cultural diversity of the international community. It can thus be safely called the collective expression of human conscience. It has withstood the test of time and resisted attacks

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

based on ‘relativism’. The Declaration and its core values, including non-discrimination, equity, equality, and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. Therefore, the UDHR belongs to all of us.

Islam, fourteen centuries ago, established an exemplary code for human rights. The major objective of this code is to confer on all human beings dignity and honour, and to eliminate injustice, oppression and exploitation. Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the equality among all mankind, transcending all considerations of place, colour, language and social status. These rights are part and parcel of the teaching of Islam that no ruler, government, assembly or authority can alter, curtail or violate in any way. Moreover, these rights go long way in line with the contemporary concept of human rights.

In recent times, the OIC member countries have made substantial contributions to the development of the Universal Declaration and the two International Covenants. The *travaux préparatoires* of these documents records valuable inputs given by the OIC member states on social justice, indivisibility of human rights, right to self-determination and religious freedom.

The OIC sees the Universal Declaration as a global metaphor connecting all humanity. It is a living document. Its full import needs to be invoked to face contemporary challenges, like the rising tide of incitement to religious hatred and discrimination and intolerance targeting Muslims. Attempts to equate Islam with terrorism should also be stopped. Stereotyping and demonisation of Muslims should be combated.

The inherent negativity and stereotypical images disseminated are increasingly becoming a source of grave concern to us and to all peace-loving circles in the world as these practices tend to incite hatred, discrimination and intolerance. While we emphasise the increasing trend of Islamophobia, we, at the same time offer our cooperation to address anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and anti-Western misperceptions as well.

By linking the crimes committed by a small fringe of misguided individuals with Islam and its teachings, these circles grant these criminals a premise, anchor and justification that they don't own or deserve, and encourage them to persevere in their objectionable deeds. In so doing, they do not help in combating terrorism.

Here I need to clarify the position of the OIC vis-à-vis the notion of ‘defamation of religions’ which seems to create some misunderstanding and misinterpretations in some circles.

APPENDIX 6

As far as Islam is concerned, our aim is not to protect religion against critics based on objective and rational interrogation. It is a fundamental principle in Islam for the believer to always question himself/herself, not only on the way he/she is practicing the Islamic teachings but also how to readapt to any practical circumstances and specific environments. What we are concerned about is the tendency of a new episode of extremist behavior against the adherents of a particular religion who are currently subjects of stereotyping, incitement to hatred, violence and racial discrimination.

This is not the only matter of national or local concern but it should be seen as a globalised phenomenon which needs to be addressed globally in an effective manner.

At the same time, the OIC is firmly committed to respect for freedom of expression which is a fundamental human rights. The OIC is not looking for limitation or restrictions of this freedom beyond those that already have been set by Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The line, the limit between criticism of religions and insult/incitement to hatred should be clarified. Each case should be taken up on its own merits. We have to be sure about what constitutes criticism but not incitement to hatred. For example, when somebody calls for burning of our holy book the Quran, can it be considered as mere criticism? When the cemetery tombs of Muslim soldiers who fought for the flag of an European nation and sacrificed their lives are desecrated by extremists and racists, is it criticism of religion or an act of hatred and racism?

We believe that there is no freedom without responsibilities and accountabilities. To our regret, freedom of expression has been abused and exploited by some for obvious political, financial and other gains. What is needed is practical local and international mechanisms to address acts of incitement to religious or racial hatred which constitute a dangerous threat for the preservation of peace and harmony among communities. Combating ignorance and misunderstanding, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and exchanges, encouraging education on cultural diversity and mutual respect are some avenues to create and sustain a viable atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. We need to strengthen our efforts on this perspective. The OIC will continue to work with other international partners such as UNESCO, Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat, Council of Europe, OSCE and EU institutions in order to foster dialogue between the West and the Muslim World and to face challenges posed by misperceptions, stereotypes and misinformation.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

The OIC is going through a phase of introspection and soul searching on human rights. As the first major step in this field, the OIC adopted in the year 2000, the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI). This Declaration was not conceived as an alternative to the Universal Declaration even though it additionally addresses religious and cultural specificity of the Muslim countries. The OIC has moved beyond the Cairo Declaration. In December 2005, OIC leaders at their Third Extraordinary Summit Conference in Makkah unanimously declared that contemporary reform and development must be anchored in the principles of good governance, protection of human rights, social justice, transparency and accountability. The Summit outlined a Ten-Year Programme of Action with a road map for enhancement of human rights, for striving for enlargement of political participation and promotion of equality, civil liberties and social justice in the OIC member states. The new OIC Charter adopted during the last OIC Summit in Dakar, Senegal, in March 2008, called for the establishment of an independent permanent Commission to promote 'the civil, political, social and economic rights enshrined in the organisation's covenants, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, and in universally agreed human rights instruments'. In accordance with these provisions, the OIC member states are also committed to strengthening their national laws and regulations to guarantee respect for human rights in their respected countries.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 60th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights is also coinciding with the birth of the United Nations Human Rights Council as a safeguarding mechanism for promoting and protecting all human rights based on the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation. The OIC attaches great importance to these fundamental principles and would like to see them fully adhered to in the working methods of the Council.

To this end, the OIC countries continue to remain committed to the spirit of interactive and constructive dialogue with the rest of the international community for the success of our new Council. Once again, I echo the core message of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers Conference held in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2006, to the Human Rights Council, which underlined the following principles: (a) universality,

APPENDIX 6

objectivity and non-selectivity (b) cooperation and genuine dialogue to strengthen the capacity of states to comply with human rights obligations and (c) enhanced dialogue to broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome the current discussions of the Durban Review Conference and Working Group on the follow up to the Durban Conference. It should help strengthen its preparatory process which is long overdue. The upcoming Durban Review Conference should provide us all an opportunity to discuss the contemporary scourge of racism as well as to suggest the most practical and efficient solutions to deal with them.

In its written contribution to the Preparatory process of Durban Review Conference, the OIC group in Geneva highlighted the daunting challenges to be overcome in this battle with reference to reports of a number of independent UN and EU experts including the European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia. Many obstacles should be vigorously addressed such as weak legislation and policies, lack of moral education and practical strategies, non implementation of international legal framework and commitment by some, persisting impunity on different ground such as freedom of expression, and sharp increase in the extreme right wing, xenophobic political platforms. The concrete proposals and recommendations provided by the OIC group in Geneva should be duly taken on board to address those challenges practically and efficiently.

The OIC had made it clear that the Durban Review process should not be a politically motivated process or an anti—Semitic exercise. It should be, on the contrary an inclusive process, where all stakeholders should be free to address the real and serious challenges of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

I seize this opportunity to echo and support the call of the new High Commissioner on Human Rights for an active and positive participation of all stakeholders in the next year Durban Review Conference in Geneva.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

While the international community is concluding a year long campaign of awareness in the context of celebrating the 60th anniversary of the

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we, in reality, have also mourned some of the failures of the international community, including the Human Rights Council in implementing its mandates and relevant resolutions for combating the systematic violations of basic rights of the Palestinian people during the last forty-five years.

Since the inception of the Council, we have witnessed rejection to allow delegations to investigate the abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Human Rights Council cannot and should not be indifferent to this defiance while being called upon to take concrete measures for dealing with the systematic human rights abuses against Palestinian people and should devise new ways by which to ensure the protection of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When addressing human rights challenges, we should not neglect or underestimate the crucial socio-economic problems faced by the least developed and under-developed countries, such as extreme poverty, illiteracy, hunger, endemic diseases and lack of access to health care. All these challenges are being aggravated by the negative impact of cyclical environmental disturbances and climate change.

We should give full consideration to those developmental challenges which constitute serious obstacles in implementing the noble objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this regard, I call for reinforcement of cooperation and better coordination of international efforts in order to provide sustainable solutions to those problems. From our part, within the new vision of our Organisation enshrined in our new Charter and Ten Year Programme of Action, we identified the above socio-economic challenges including women, child and family issues as priority areas for our joint action. Therefore, I am extremely happy that the second section of this forum is dedicated to development and humanitarian assistance issues during which we will be able to present information on the activities of our newly created Humanitarian Affairs Department.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by restating once again that we are in a defining moment in carrying out our share of responsibilities. A year long celebration for the 60th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the start of the new institution of Human Rights Council,

APPENDIX 6

give us ample opportunities to reevaluate the past performances and take concrete measures to protect and promote human rights for all and combat new manifestations of racism, discrimination and xenophobia. This is a global challenge which, like all other challenges, needs collective efforts to deal with. So let begin the long journey, supported by our belief in and conviction of the justice for all and with the help of our collective wisdom which had proven in the past to be the best guarantor of safeguarding human dignity and rights for all.

When we celebrate the 60th Anniversary, we should certainly be inspired by and cherish the impressive progress and success of humanity in the past sixty years, despite all the wars, aggressions, gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity in many parts of the world which caused immense suffering for millions of people. Therefore it is our sincere hope that the future will witness less black stains in the record of human rights globally and the balance sheet will look more positive than today.

Myself, as the OIC Secretary General, would like to state in all sincerity that we will do our best to uphold and defend for all, the lofty values of the Universal Declaration in cooperation with the international community.

APPENDIX 7

Open letter addressed by the Secretary General to President Obama
published in New York Times and International Herald Tribune

(20 January 2009)

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu

Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Dear President OBAMA,

With great respect, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Muslim world on your ground breaking election as President of the United States. The Muslim world has cheered your election and holds high hopes for your historic presidency. The eyes of the world now eagerly await your leadership and the fulfillment of your vision, promises, and pledges beyond America's shores.

The desire for peace is universal. Yet as the conflicts of the last decade have shown, the quest for peace is easily frustrated. We warmly welcome your expressed desire to give a major address in a Muslim nation soon after you assume the presidency and hope that it will mark the beginning of a more fruitful and better-informed dialogue between the West and the Muslim world. Above all, what is needed is the restoration of mutual confidence. Throughout the globe, Muslims hunger for a new era of peace, concordance, and tranquility. We firmly believe that America, with your guidance, can help foster that peace, though real peace can only be shared - never imposed. A nation can either be great or feared, but rarely both at the same time.

APPENDIX 7

Myths

Many myths about Islam, fostered by extremists in both the West and East, have proliferated in the last decade, and a new word—“Islamophobia”—has even entered the world’s lexicon to describe anti-Muslim acts of prejudice and violence. Despite these pernicious myths, you will find that Islam is a religion of peace. Tolerance is its benchmark and borne of the very nature of Islam. Nor is Islam an exclusive religion. It is an integral part of the history of world religions. It continues and confirms the previous scriptures. Along with Christianity and Judaism, Islam emanates from the same part of the world, comes from the same God, and holds to the same Prophets, mainly Abraham. It has been tested over fourteen hundred years, and shown itself to be a religion of compassion, mercy, justice, and equality.

Extremists in any faith or tradition are rare, though they often command disproportionate attention. But the often overlooked truth is Islam is also the religion of moderation. It celebrates diversity and acknowledges and venerates a wide array of religions.

Islam, in fact, abhors extremism and fanaticism and calls for treading the path of the “middle way” in favor of tolerance and reconciliation. It exhorts Muslims to be morally responsive to the truth and to goodness, and to be alert to all that is false, evil or destructive.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which I have the honor to represent, is not a religious organization. After the United Nations, it is the largest official, inter-governmental organization in the world. It is composed of fifty-seven sovereign states, almost all of whom are secular. The population of these states collectively amounts to 1.5 billion—or one fourth of humanity.

Moderation and Modernization

One of the OIC’s guiding principles is to practice “moderation and modernisation.” To cite one example, it was at our demand that the UN General Assembly organized a host of events and activities around the world to disseminate the idea of “Dialogue among civilizations” as an alternative to those who predict a coming “clash of civilizations.”

We have been alarmed by this tendency to divide the world into rival civilizations—civilized and uncivilized, good and evil, friend and enemy. As a youth who spent part of his childhood abroad, you are well aware of the dangers of stereotyping. We believe you will have a

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

unique opportunity to promote tolerance and nurture vibrant multi-cultural societies.

It is for these reasons that the OIC has been in the forefront of the Muslim battle against terrorism.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon. It has no specific culture, race, or region. The root causes of terrorism are surely complicated but they include deprivation, poverty, despair and, most importantly, political injustice. Children do not emerge from the womb to announce they will become terrorists. They learn to be terrorists when injustice and tragedy are twinned with powerlessness. The decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people provides only the most recent and potent illustration of the link between oppression, injustice, and violence. The violence in the Mideast and the Palestinian people deserve an urgent and just remedy.

Change and Partnership

The most powerful word in your election campaign was “change.” Change must make the world a better place, correct wrongs and right the twisted. As an organisation, we too have undergone substantial reform in charting an enlightened future for the Muslim world. As Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, I wish to assure you that we will be at your side to see that justice prevails and that the forces which are out to undo peace are defeated. At the OIC we are firmly committed to cooperating with you and your new administration to foster constructive dialogue and facilitate solutions to the intractable predicaments plaguing the Muslim world and beyond.

In this regard, we are keen to build on the commendable initiative taken recently regarding the appointment of a U.S. Special Envoy to the OIC, and opening an office for him in the U.S. State Department. We are confident that this useful post will be endorsed and perhaps expanded under your leadership.

We also look forward to working with the new Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is no stranger to the Muslim world. In the coming months, we hope to build on the existing channel of communication between the United States and the OIC and open new ones.

Muslims today, around the world, believe that they have compelling strategic and moral reasons to cooperate and peacefully co-exist with

APPENDIX 7

the United States in particular, and with the West in general. Past episodes of short-lived misunderstandings should give way to a long future of peaceful cohabitation, making use of our shared civilizations and values to build a better future for all mankind. As you eloquently stated in your election-night acceptance speech in November, “our stories are singular but our destiny is shared.”

APPENDIX 8

Agenda of the Eleventh Islamic Summit Conference
(Dakar, 13–14 March 2008)

1. Election of Members of the Bureau.
2. Adoption of the Agenda and Work Programme.
3. Report of the Chairman of the 10th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference.
4. Reports of the Chairmen of the Committee of Al-Quds and the Standing Committees (COMCEC; COMIAC; COMSTECH).
5. OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action (POA).
6. Panels:
 - a. Which Economic Partnership for the Ummah?
 - b. Sharing knowledge within the Ummah.
7. Revision of the OIC Charter.
8. Pledging Session for Voluntary Contributions.
9. Adoption of the Report of the Ministerial Meeting.
10. Adoption of the Decisions of Heads of State and Government.

APPENDIX 9

*Agenda of the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Council
of Foreign Ministers*

(Damascus, 23–25 May 2009)

(A) political affairs:

1. The Cause of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict:
 - a) Development of situation in Palestine and the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.
 - b) The Occupied Syrian Golan.
 - c) Israel's continued occupation of Lebanese territories.
 - d) The current situation of the Peace Process in the Middle East.
2. Islamic Office for the Boycott of Israel.
3. Political Issues (Country Files):
 - The situation in Iraq
 - The Jammu and Kashmir Dispute
 - The Peace Process between India and Pakistan
 - The situation in Somalia
 - Solidarity with the Republic of Sudan
 - The situation in Cyprus
 - Providing assistance to the Union of Comoros
 - Question of the Comoros island of Mayotte
 - The aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan
 - The situation in Afghanistan
 - The situation in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

- The situation at the border between the Republic of Djibouti and Eritrea
- The situation in Kosovo.
- 4. Combating international terrorism.
- 5. Combating the use of internet by terrorists.
- 6. Imposition of unilateral economic sanctions on Member States.
- 7. The right of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to reparation for the losses caused by the 1986 American military aggression.
- 8. The problem of refugees in the Muslim World.
- 9. Reform of the United Nations and expansion of the UN Security Council's membership.
- 10. Disarmament issues.
- 11. Cooperation by the Islamic Republic of Iran with IAEA.
- 12. Condemnation of Israel for possession of nuclear capability to develop nuclear arsenals.
- 13. Security and solidarity among Member States.
- 14. Strengthening the Islamic unity.
- 15. Review and rationalization of OIC agenda items and its resolutions.
- 16. Designating 5th of August of every year as the Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity Day.
- 17. Combating Islamophobia and eliminating hatred and prejudice against Islam.

(B) Muslim communities and minorities in non-oic member states:

- 18. The situation of Muslim Communities and Minorities in non-OIC Member States.
- 19. The question of Muslims in Southern Philippines.
- 20. The situation of the Turkish Muslim Minority of Western Thrace, Greece.
- 21. The situation of the Muslim Minority in Myanmar.
- 22. The situation of Muslims in Southern Thailand

(C) Humanitarian affairs:

- 23. Report of the Secretary General on Humanitarian Affairs in the OIC Member States.

APPENDIX 9

24. Draft working paper on the mandate of International Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Department (ICHAD), (2009–2013).

(D) Legal affairs:

25. Follow-up and coordination of work on human rights.
26. The signing and ratification of treaties concluded in the framework of the OIC.
27. The establishment of the OIC independent Commission on Human Rights.

(E) Organic, statutory and general questions:

28. Candidacies for international positions.
29. Procedures for obtaining full membership in the OIC.
30. The UAE's hosting of the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency.
31. The Establishment of a specialised organisation for Women Development in the OIC Member States.
32. Strengthening the role of the OIC General Secretariat in coordinating the work of the OIC subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions and holding OIC sectoral Ministerial Conference.
33. Appointment by the CFM of Assistant Secretaries General.
34. Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the OIC.

(F) Information affairs:

35. Information and media issues.
36. Cooperation between the OIC General Secretariat and the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF).
37. Collaboration of Computer Emergency Response Team with OIC Member States (CERT).

(G) Economic affairs:

38. Activities Related to the implementation of the Ten-year Programme of Action.
39. Activities Related to the Implementation of the Decisions of the COMCEC.
40. Activities Related to Economic Assistance to Member States, Non-OIC Countries and Muslim Communities.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NEW CENTURY

41. Activities Related to other Ministerial Conferences and fora in the Economic Sectors.
42. Reports on the activities of the OIC organs and institutions working in the economic field.

(H) Science and technology:

43. Science and Technology Matters (10-Year POA, Vision 1441 H).
44. Higher Education Matters (10-Year POA, Vision 1441 H).
45. Health Matters (10-Year POA).
46. Environment Matters (10-Year POA).
47. Activities of the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH).
48. Activities of the Islamic University of Technology.
49. Activities of the Islamic University in Niger.
50. Activities of the Islamic University in Uganda.

(I) Dawa affairs:

51. Islamic Dawa Activities and Committee for Coordination of Joint Islamic Action.

(J) Cultural and social affairs:

52. General Cultural Matters (OIC 10-Year POA).
53. Protection of Islamic Holy Places.
54. Social Issues (OIC 10-Year POA).
55. Palestinian Cultural and Social Affairs (OIC 10-Year POA).
56. Islamic Cultural Centers and Institutes.
57. OIC organs and institutions working in the cultural field.
58. Activities of the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC).

(K) Administrative and financial affairs:

59. Arrears of Member States contribution.
60. Authorizing the 38th Permanent Finance Committee to approve, on behalf of the Council, the budgets of the General Secretariat and its Subsidiary Organs for the year 2010 as well as any other financial and administrative issues.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers chaired by King Faisal bin Abdulaziz in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on February 29, 1972 where the OIC Charter was adopted.
2. A group photo of OIC Secretary Generals (L-R): Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada of Pakistan (1985–88), Dr. Amadou Karim Gaye of Senegal (1975–79), Hassan Al-Touhami of Egypt (1974–75), Habib Chatty of Tunisia (1979–84), and Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu of Turkey (2005–present).
3. Newly elected Secretary General of the OIC Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, speaking to journalists after his election at the 31st Session of the OIC Conference of Foreign Ministers (Istanbul, Turkey, 2004) with President Abdullah Gül, who was then Foreign Minister of Turkey.
4. The Third OIC extraordinary Summit held in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in December 2005 where the Ten-Year Programme of Action was adopted.
5. A meeting of the High Panel for revising the OIC Charter held in Istanbul, Turkey on May 18, 2006.
6. President of Senegal Abdoulaye Wade (R) and OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu (L) listening to the Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio at the 11th Session of the Islamic Summit (Dakar, Senegal, 13–14 March 2008) where the new OIC Charter was adopted. (epa photo)



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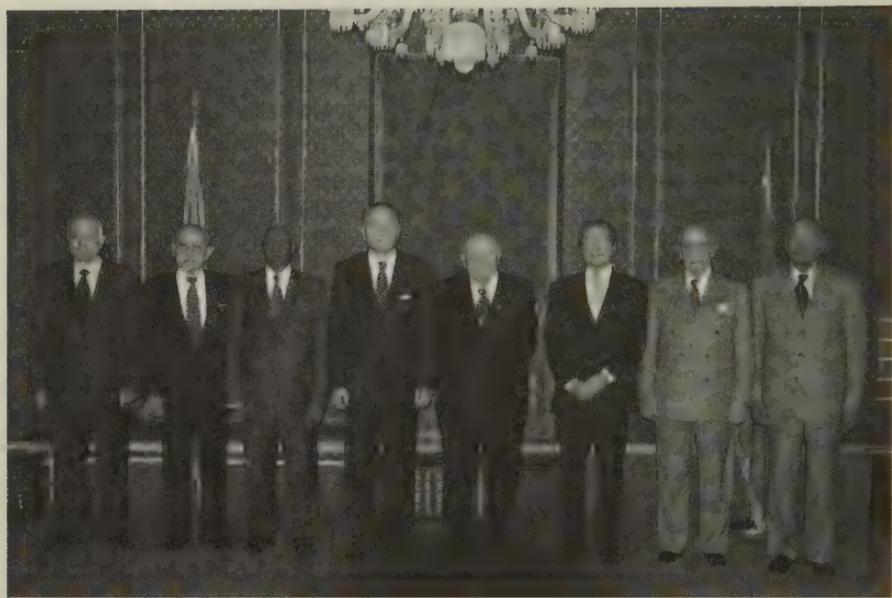
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